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NATO AND COALITION WARFARE IN AFGHANISTAN, 2001-2014

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NATO AND COALITION WARFARE IN AFGHANISTAN, 2001-2014

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A thesis submitted for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

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ABSTRACT

This thesis analyzes the involvement of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) in the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) in Afghanistan. Specifically, it analyzes multinational military adaptation and change at the operational level within the ISAF coalition which operated in the midst of a complex conflict that changed in character over time. NATO was not initially involved in military operations, but this changed slowly over time. First, it decided to take over ISAF in Kabul, and then it expanded ISAF, both geographically and operationally. ISAF then surged, followed by an organized withdrawal. Why did this happen and how did ISAF maintain coalition cohesion throughout the campaign in Afghanistan? Despite a multitude of forces that should have frayed coalition cohesion, such as intra-alliance friction over burden-sharing, operational inefficiencies related to national caveats, reluctance to commit forces, especially to engage in combat, and a widespread perception the war was a failure, the ISAF coalition did not fall apart and contributing nations did not abandon their partners. Instead, cohesion endured, the coalition increased in size and expanded what it did, and NATO members and partners stayed engaged for some thirteen years. This thesis proposes an analytical framework comprised of two drivers, political will and organizational capacity, to explain this puzzle.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

The Puzzle.

In the annals of North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) history, 2011 was a banner year for the Alliance because it was engaged in a wide range of military operations around the world. These included ground, naval, and air missions, such as the continuing peace support operations in Kosovo in the NATO-led Kosovo Force (KFOR).¹ Maritime operations were encompassed in two different missions – *Active Endeavour* and *Ocean Shield*. *Operation Active Endeavour* had been launched in response to the Alliance’s Article 5 declaration after the United States was attacked by al Qaeda on September 11th, 2001. This naval mission monitored shipping to detect, deter, and protect against terrorist-related activities in the Mediterranean Sea.² *Operation Ocean Shield* was a counter-piracy mission operating off the Horn of Africa and in the Gulf of Aden. Its surface vessels and maritime patrol aircraft deterred piracy activity and offered escort assistance. It also offered training to countries in the region to improve the indigenous capacity to fight piracy.³ The NATO Training Mission–Iraq (NTM-I) developed Iraqi Security Forces through training and mentoring activities and it contributed to establishing training structures and institutions.⁴ The NATO-led intervention in Libya, called *Operation Unified Protector*, was undertaken under a United Nations (UN) mandate and with the encouragement and support of the

¹ Anders Fogh Rasmussen, *The Secretary General’s Annual Report 2011* (Brussels: NATO Public Diplomacy Division, 2012), 8. The KFOR mission began under a UN Security Council mandate (1244) in June 1999 with a force of 50,000 troops. By the start of 2011, the force was 10,000 troops and it was reduced to 5,500 troops in March.

² NATO, “Operation Active Endeavour,” http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natolive/topics_7932.htm. The operation began in October 2001 and was conducted by a Task Force of surface vessels, submarines and maritime patrol aircraft. It was commanded and controlled by Allied Maritime Component Command Naples, Italy. The objective of the operation was to prevent another attack like the ones against the USS Cole in 2000 and the French oil tanker Limburg in 2002. The naval force gathered and processed intelligence information about suspect vessels. As of 2011, it had hailed over 100,000 merchant vessels and boarded approximately 155 suspect ships.

³ Rasmussen, *The Secretary General’s Annual Report 2011*, 9. Counter-piracy operations began in 2008. *Operation Ocean Shield* was carried out in compliance with relevant UN Security Council Resolutions and in coordination with other key organizations, such as the European Union, the African Union and the United Nations.

⁴ Ibid. During its seven years of execution (August 2004-December 2011), NTM-I “trained over 5,200 commissioned and non-commissioned officers of the Iraqi Armed Forces and around 10,000 Iraqi Police.”

League of Arab States. This operation was oriented on protecting Libyan civilians and it utilized air and naval assets to enforce a maritime arms embargo, to enforce a no-fly zone, and to conduct precision air and naval strikes against Muammar Qadhafi's military forces.⁵ Airborne surveillance over the Mediterranean Sea by the Alliance's fleet of Airborne Warning and Control System (AWACS) airplanes supported both *Operation Active Endeavour* and *Operation Unified Protector*.⁶ These operations were dwarfed by the operations in Afghanistan.

The largest and most significant military activity in 2011, and the only mission in which all 28 of the allies participated, was the NATO-led International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) mission in Afghanistan. Its objective was to ensure the country would "never again be a base for global terrorism."⁷ Not only was the year significant because it was the apogee of NATO's involvement in Afghanistan, but it was also the year the ISAF coalition reached its maximum size in terms of participating nations, 50, and number of troops deployed, over 130,000.⁸ Over the course of the year, ISAF, in partnership with Afghan security forces, engaged in counter-insurgency and counter-terrorism operations against an insurgent coalition that included a reconstituted Taliban and associated groups, such as the Haqqani Network and al Qaeda. It engaged in a range of peace support operations that included stabilization and reconstruction activities through 28 Provincial Reconstruction Teams (PRT). In addition, the NATO Training Mission-Afghanistan (NTM-A), the coalition's main effort, focused on developing the Afghan National Security Forces (ANSF) by training and mentoring the Afghan National Army (ANA) and Afghan National Police (ANP).⁹ Finally, ISAF began transitioning full responsibility for security to Afghan forces

⁵ Ibid., 7-8.

⁶ NATO, "NATO's airborne surveillance: Eyes in the sky," March 18, 2011, http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natolive/news_71614.htm. NATO AWACS operations were not limited to the Mediterranean region. For seven months, from October 2001 to May 2002, seven NATO AWACS aircraft patrolled the airspace over the continental United States.

⁷ Rasmussen, *The Secretary General's Annual Report 2011*, 2.

⁸ All 28 members of the Alliance were in the coalition. "International Security Assistance Force," ISAF Placemat, December 1, 2011, <http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natolive/107995.htm>.

⁹ Rasmussen, *The Secretary General's Annual Report 2011*, 4-6. Also, NATO, "International Security Assistance Force (ISAF): Key Facts and Figures," January 9, 2012, <http://www.nato.int/isaf/docu/epub/pdf/placemat.pdf>.

during the year. *Tranche* 1 of the transition began in March and it included Bamiyan province and the city of Mazar-e-Sharif. *Tranche* 2 began in November. In the relevant provinces, districts, and cities, ISAF maintained a presence but the troops no longer engaged in direct combat, instead they provided support to ANSF.¹⁰

This extensive range of global military activity undertaken in a wide variety of operational coalitions was unprecedented for a security organization created more than six decades before to defend against Soviet aggression, prevent the re-emergence of German *revanchism*, and keep the United States engaged in Europe. Furthermore, the wide range in forms of coalition warfare – precision combat strikes, peace support operations, humanitarian assistance, counter-terrorism, counter-piracy, counter-insurgency, stabilization and reconstruction, and training – seemed to demonstrate that NATO was an adaptive organization capable of changing to meet the demands of a dynamic international security environment. NATO had evolved from being a static, defensive alliance focused on deterring conventional and nuclear war to a security organization that could respond to a wide range of challenges. It had expeditionary capabilities that could be deployed in discrete operational combined force packages, which were multinational coalitions, and it could engage in a wide range of military missions.

Of all NATO's activities in 2011, the ISAF mission was the most ambitious (in reality it was trying to help create a resilient Afghan state) and the most extensive in terms of the multinational force contributions involved (ground, air, and naval troops and assets) and the range of operational missions. It could not only be argued that the NATO engaged in Afghanistan was almost unrecognizable from the Cold War NATO, but also that the ISAF operating in country was dramatically transformed from the ISAF that deployed in December 2001. More specifically, NATO was not initially involved in military operations in Afghanistan, but this changed slowly over time. First, it decided to take over ISAF in Kabul, and then it expanded ISAF, both geographically and operationally. ISAF then

¹⁰ NATO, "Transition to Afghan lead: *Inteqal*," December 2011, http://www.nato.int/nato_static/assets/pdf/pdf_topics/20111210_111207-Backgrounder-Inteq-en.pdf. Also, NATO – news, "Mazar after transition," November 18, 2011, http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natolive/news_81069.htm.

surged, followed by an organized withdrawal. Why did this happen and how did ISAF maintain coalition cohesion throughout the campaign in Afghanistan?

The fact that cohesion endured among the allies and partners in Afghanistan is a puzzle because there was a multitude of forces that should have frayed the coalition. They included: intra-alliance tensions and conflicts over burden-sharing; disagreements about what ISAF should do; concerns about U.S. unilateralism; reluctance to get involved in combat operations or to remain engaged over the long term; and operational inefficiencies from restrictive national caveats and resource, training, and doctrinal shortfalls that led to inconclusive tactical operations which produced a widespread perception the international effort was a failure. These problems were exacerbated by major miscalculations about the character of the conflict, under-estimations of Taliban resilience, and significant deficiencies among the Afghan partners, including corruption and human capital weaknesses.

As the thesis delves into this puzzle, it will address related questions. For example, why did NATO get involved when the enemy did not threaten the survival of its members? How come the complexity of the conflict in Afghanistan did not fracture the coalition, especially when it was going badly? Why did the missions expand, particularly into the governance and economic domains when that is not what security alliances are traditionally for and why did this not undermine cohesion? Why did no NATO member defect from the coalition, especially considering the Alliance was otherwise globally engaged? Why did partner nations join and stay engaged when they had no formal power in Alliance decision-making?

The evidence of history suggests that alliances and coalitions can be fragile and they have often fractured under combat pressures or when members undergo national political or economic crises during the conflict. It can be argued that alliances, which result from formal treaties or agreements and have a long-term nature, should be more durable than coalitions, which are short-term in nature and result from ad hoc and temporary combinations in response to sudden or emerging threats. In addition, it seems logical to assume that when the stakes are high it is more likely allies and partners will stick together, especially in formal

alliances, than in cases when the stakes are lower, the situation is opaque, or goals and objectives are tenuous. However, history seems to indicate otherwise; alliances have often seemed to be as brittle as coalitions since political, social, economic, or battlefield conditions can fatally undermine the ties that should bind alliances strongly together. For example, in the 5th century B.C. the existential threat posed by recurring Persian invasions did not deter constantly shifting alignments among the Greek city-states as they fought each other and against Persia.¹¹ During the Thirty Years War, despite the invariably heavy costs imposed by war, a number of the protagonists in the Holy Roman Empire changed sides during the conflict due to religious, political, and combat pressures.¹² The six coalitions formed against France during the French revolutionary and Napoleonic wars were a constantly shifting kaleidoscope. The early coalitions in particular were “fragmented by divergent war aims and mutual suspicions” which led to uncoordinated operations, battlefield failures, and disintegration as allies sued for peace individually with France.¹³ In the last century, France went to great lengths to form alliances before the First and Second World Wars because it knew it could not survive German aggression alone, but even so struggled to convince potential allies equally threatened by Germany to enter into alliance. For example, it could not convince the USSR in August 1939 that alliance with France would offer both better long-term prospects than operating separately, or by letting it conclude a Soviet-German pact. And even in June 1940, rather than continuing the war from its territories and colonies overseas, in continued alliance with Britain, the French government decided to defect and surrender to Germany.¹⁴ The subsequent Anglo-American alliance was fraught with rivalries, prejudices, frictions, arguments, and disagreements from the political level to military operational and tactical levels. Some strategic disagreements

¹¹ Victor Davis Hanson, *A War Like No Other: How the Athenians and Spartans Fought the Peloponnesian War* (New York: Random House, 2005), 18-19, 291-293.

¹² C. V. Wedgwood, *The Thirty Years War* (New York: Review Books, 2005), 178, 191, 329, 348, 501-505.

¹³ Gunther E. Rothenberg, *The Art of Warfare in the Age of Napoleon* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1980), 34-58.

¹⁴ Philip Nord, *France 1940: Defending the Republic* (New Haven, CT and London: Yale University Press, 2015), 118-132.

were so serious they “threatened the cohesion of the alliance.” However, they did not prevent an unprecedented degree of cooperation and the complete fusion and integration of allied strategy, planning efforts, and intelligence sharing, or the execution of unified operations which ultimately achieved victory.¹⁵ It seems even when allies share a view of the danger they face, as the UK and France and the U.S and UK did against Adolf Hitler’s Germany, a solid and enduring alliance is not necessarily a foregone conclusion. If this applies to cases of extreme danger, then one would expect an alliance or coalition facing lesser risk to fray even more easily. That this did not happen in the case studied here, makes it all the more interesting.

As the introduction suggests, alliances and coalitions are not necessarily separate and distinct. Since the end of the Cold War, it seems NATO has developed into a formal alliance that can generate discrete multinational coalitions to deal with different security challenges. Its wide range of missions in 2011 demonstrates this point. However, the level of allied participation in them has varied widely and they face different levels of fraying forces. Afghanistan presented a particular challenge. In fact, given the negative historical experiences of alliances and coalitions, the low stakes involved in the war in Afghanistan, the inconclusive nature of the conflict against the Taliban, the fraying forces identified above, and the fact that today for many European countries war is considered an illegitimate means for resolving international differences, one could argue that the ISAF coalition should have fallen apart and that NATO’s involvement in Afghanistan should not have happened or that it should not have developed in the way that it did. However, the fact remains that somehow the Alliance became engaged and ISAF stayed together and maintained an unprecedented level of cohesion in a highly complex conflict, for an extended period of time, in a region far from Alliance territory. Furthermore, ISAF was able to accommodate an ever larger coalition and expand the forms of warfare it undertook. This

¹⁵ Niall Barr, *Eisenhower’s Armies: The American-British Alliance During World War II* (New York: Pegasus Books, 2015), 1-5, 458-470.

thesis proposes an explanation based on concepts related to organizational learning and military adaptation.

Alliances and coalitions are generated and exist within the conditions of a given strategic environment. NATO and the ISAF coalition are no exception. Furthermore, dramatic shifts in the strategic environment can be the precipitating agents for change within military organizations, especially if they possess the organizational capacity to learn and adapt. The next section will briefly discuss two key aspects of the international environment, the post-Cold War security environment and the increasing institutionalization of the international system, which influenced Alliance developments and activities, before it examines the literature from which this thesis derives its analytical framework.

Evolving International Environment.

The dissolution of the Soviet Union in the late 1980s threw the Alliance into a period of strategic uncertainty. NATO leaders struggled to situate the organization in the dramatically changed international environment which included the emergence of new security threats.

Over the years, many scholars and policy experts have written about the post-Cold War security environment and the state and non-state threats that have emerged and could emerge.¹⁶ Attention initially focused on Europe because it was the center of U.S. foreign and security policy and it was “also the region . . . most directly and dramatically affected by the end of the Cold War.”¹⁷ A common subject in the early 1990s was the reunified Germany. Multiple arguments were made that Europe would likely return to its pre-1945 past when German power threatened its neighbors and European inter-state conflict and war was common.¹⁸ However, this concern disappeared over time as Germany remained deeply

¹⁶ Colin Fleming effectively captured the debate on whether and how war, the nature of war, and warfare had changed after 1990. Colin M. Fleming, “New or Old Wars: Debating a Clausewitzian Future,” *The Journal of Strategic Studies*, Vol. 32, No. 2 (April 2009): 213-241.

¹⁷ Sean M. Lynn-Jones and Steven E. Miller, eds., *America’s Strategy in a Changing World: An International Security Reader* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1992), xiv.

¹⁸ The fears of British Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher and French President François Mitterrand and other policymakers were documented in: Philip Zelikow and Condoleezza Rice, *Germany Unified and Europe Transformed: A Study in Statecraft* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press,

integrated in Euro-Atlantic international institutions and German political leaders maintained peaceful foreign and security policies.¹⁹ Another common European security concern was Russia. For years, scholars and policy experts warned that Russia still maintained large conventional and nuclear forces and that it was not out of the question that an “over-armed” and dangerous Russia could emerge if the conditions were right.²⁰ As the post-communist transition got underway in Central, Southeastern, and Eastern Europe, there were warnings of the potential for ethnic and border disputes, and the disruptive, large-scale migration flows that could result, if nationalism and militarism re-emerged.²¹ The legitimacy of this security concern seemed borne out by the conflict and violence that erupted with the disintegration of Yugoslavia.

The non-state and transnational threats analyzed were diverse. Martin van Creveld argued the predominant form of war had become low intensity conflict, in which at least one side consisted of guerrillas, insurgents, or terrorists. Subsequent analysis of these non-state actors was extensive.²² A consistent concern was the negative implications of the spread of

1997), xii, xiii, 2, 96; and Melvyn P. Leffler, *For the Soul of Mankind: The United States, the Soviet Union, and the Cold War* (New York: Hill and Wang, 2007), 439-440. Also Kenneth N. Waltz, “The Emerging Structure of International Politics,” *International Security*, Vol. 18, No. 2 (Fall 1993): 50, 62-67; and Steven Van Evera, “Primed for Peace: Europe After the Cold War,” *International Security*, Vol. 15, No. 3 (Winter 1990/91): 7-9.

¹⁹ Mary Hampton argued that this was because NATO succeeded in its mission to forge a positive identity between Germany and the U.S. and with the Alliance. She maintains Germans have placed their trust in NATO and the transatlantic security relationship and that “Germans link their security to the United States through the Alliance.” Mary N. Hampton, “NATO, Germany, and the United States: Creating Positive Identity in Trans-Atlantia,” *Security Studies*, Vol. 8, No. 2-3 (Winter 1998/1999): 237, 238, 263, 266.

²⁰ Ted Hopf, “Managing Soviet Disintegration: A Demand for Behavioral Regimes,” in Lynn-Jones and Miller, eds., *America’s Strategy in a Changing World*, 119, 123. Also, Colin Gray, “Do the Changes Within the Soviet Union Provide a Basis for Eased Soviet-American Relations? A Skeptical View,” in Robert Jervis and Seweryn Bialer, eds., *Soviet-American Relations After the Cold War* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1990), 61-75. More recently, Colin Gray has highlighted the concerns raised by a resurgent Russia and its alignment with China. Colin S. Gray, *Another Bloody Century: Future Warfare* (London: Phoenix, 2006), 49, 72, 179, 382-383.

²¹ Robert Jervis, “The Future of World Politics: Will It Resemble the Past?” in Lynn-Jones and Miller, eds., *America’s Strategy in a Changing World*, 19-20; and F. Stephen Larrabee, “Down and Out in Warsaw and Budapest: Eastern Europe and East-West Migration,” in Lynn-Jones and Miller, eds., *America’s Strategy in a Changing World*, 240. Jack Snyder argued nationalist tendencies were likely to emerge in Eastern Europe and this could lead to conflict. Jack Snyder, “Averting Anarchy in the New Europe,” in Sean M. Lynn-Jones and Steven E. Miller, eds., *The Cold War and After, Prospects for Peace: An International Security Reader* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1994), 111-112.

²² Martin van Creveld, *On Future War* (London: Brassey’s, 1991), 20, 29, 197. Other scholars contributed their analysis on the non-state actors (guerrillas, insurgents, and terrorists), such as Richard H. Schultz, Jr. and Andrea J. Dew, *Insurgents, Terrorists and Militias: The Warriors of*

weapons of mass destruction (chemical, biological, and nuclear weapons), particularly to unstable, or rogue, states and terrorist groups.²³ Crises in Kurdistan after *Operation Desert Storm*, Somalia, Rwanda, and the disintegrating Yugoslavia brought attention to humanitarian challenges.²⁴ This generated a follow-on observation that weak, failing, and failed states posed security threats because of the possibility that violence and instability could spread to surrounding states or because they possessed ungoverned spaces which could be exploited by guerrillas, insurgents, and transnational terrorist groups.²⁵ Finally, even though terrorism had been recognized as a security threat for decades, the al Qaeda attacks of September 11th, 2001 propelled this threat to the top of policymakers' security agenda and academic analysis.²⁶ The post-Cold War security environment engendered a diverse array of dangers.

This dynamic international security environment presented the NATO Alliance the opportunity to focus on and respond to different threats. In a number of areas, the allies developed the political will to initiate military changes and undertake new activities,

Contemporary Combat (New York: Columbia University Press, 2006). Daniel Marston and Carter Malkasian, eds., *Counterinsurgency in Modern Warfare* (Long Island City, NY: Osprey Publishing, 2010). David Kilcullen, *The Accidental Guerrilla: Fighting Small Wars in the Midst of the Big One* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009). John A. Nagl, *Counterinsurgency Lessons from Malaya to Vietnam: Learning to Eat Soup With a Knife* (Westport, CT: Praeger, 2002).

²³ Robert J. Art, "A Defensible Defense: America's Grand Strategy After the Cold War," in Lynn-Jones and Miller, eds., *America's Strategy in a Changing World*, 72, 74; and Paul Kennedy, "American Grand Strategy, Today and Tomorrow: Learning from European Experience," in Paul Kennedy, ed., *Grand Strategies in War and Peace* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1991), 180; and Nathan E. Busch, *No End in Sight: The Continuing Menace of Nuclear Proliferation* (Lexington: The University Press of Kentucky, 2004); and Nathan E. Busch and Daniel H. Joyner, eds., *Combating Weapons of Mass Destruction: The Future of International Nonproliferation Policy* (Athens: The University of Georgia Press, 2009).

²⁴ The Aspen Strategy Group, *The United States and the Use of Force in the Post-Cold War Era* (Queenstown, MD: The Aspen Institute, 1995), xii, 3.

²⁵ Robert M. Gates, "Helping Others Defend Themselves: The Future of U.S. Security Assistance," *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 89, No. 3 (May/June 2010): 2; and Angel Rabasa, *Ungoverned Territories* (Santa Monica: RAND, 2008); and Robert Rotberg, ed., *When States Fail: Causes and Consequences* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2004); and Stewart Patrick, "Weak States and Global Threats: Fact or Fiction?" *The Washington Quarterly*, Vol. 29, No. 2 (Spring 2006): 27-53.

²⁶ Mark E. Stout, Jessica M. Huckabey, John R. Schindler and Jim Lacey, *The Terrorist Perspectives Project: Strategic and Operational Views of Al Qaida and Associated Movements* (Annapolis: Naval Institute Press, 2008); and Daniel Philpott, "The Challenge of September 11 to Secularism in International Relations," *World Politics*, Vol. 55 (October 2002): 66-95; and Gilles Kepel, *Jihad: The Trail of Political Islam* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2002); and Peter Neumann and M.L.R. Smith, *The Strategy of Terrorism: How It Works and Why It Fails* (New York: Routledge, 2007); and Gerard Chaliand and Arnaud Blin, eds., *The History of Terrorism: From Antiquity to Al Qaeda* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2007).

although it was frequently difficult and incremental. Organizationally, NATO seemed to adapt to the post-Cold War security environment by making successive changes in its strategic concepts, shifting its mission focus, and updating doctrine, command structures, and equipment, as it also incorporated new members. These changes played a role in giving the Alliance the capacity to undertake new forms of warfare and laid foundations that would later prove relevant to Afghanistan. In fundamental areas NATO did not change. For example, members maintained consensus that the Alliance's first priority was collective defense so the Article 5 commitment²⁷ remained sacrosanct, even though NATO did not specifically identify against whom the Alliance defended after 1990. On the other hand, over the last 25 years the Alliance undertook what could be considered radically new operations to deal with the threats posed by ethnic conflict and civil war in the Balkans and Libya, insurgency in the Balkans and Afghanistan, failed states in the Balkans and Afghanistan, and terrorism and piracy in the Mediterranean Sea, the Gulf of Aden, and Afghanistan. In fact, Afghanistan seemed to represent a synthesis of contemporary threats and challenges for it encompassed: a rogue state that was also a failed state, a transnational terrorist group and insurgents, ethnic conflict, ungoverned spaces, and a humanitarian catastrophe. Operations in Afghanistan were complicated by its remote geographic location and cultural context. Given the diverse and diffuse challenges associated with Afghanistan and the fact the Alliance had little previous experience in dealing with them, it is surprising the allies generated the political will to get involved by taking over ISAF. Even more surprising is the subsequent capacity of the coalition to adapt and change in multiple ways as the conflict escalated. It not only sustained cohesion as the number of contributing

²⁷ Article 5 is one of 14 articles in the North Atlantic Treaty. It states "The Parties agree that an armed attack against one or more of them in Europe or North America shall be considered an attack against them all and consequently they agree that, if such an armed attack occurs, each of them, in exercise of the right of individual or collective self-defence recognised by Article 51 of the Charter of the United Nations, will assist the Party or Parties so attacked by taking forthwith, individually, and in concert with the other Parties, such action as it deems necessary, including the use of armed force . . ." In effect, it is a mutual defense guarantee that promises that an attack on one will be treated as an attack on all and as such all members will rally together, in some way, to deal with the attack. North Atlantic Treaty Organization, "The North Atlantic Treaty," Washington, D.C., 4 April 1949, http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natolive/official_texts_17120.htm.

nations increased, but it also expanded its range of operational missions, or coalition warfare.

Evolutions in warfare can be considered a logical result of changes in the character of war, especially when the combatants are self-reflective and capable of learning. This thesis analyzes ISAF and coalition warfare in Afghanistan from a Clausewitzian perspective. According to Carl von Clausewitz, the essence of war is the violent clash of opposing wills. War therefore involves the use of force, fighting (or the threat of it), in a contestation between opposing sides. Furthermore, the interaction is reciprocal. Each side reacts to the other or tries to pre-empt the other. War is not an independent phenomenon. It is waged for a political purpose, and as such it is a way of pursuing political interests by means of fighting.²⁸

War is also a dynamic, complex, and diverse phenomenon, and although over the course of human history there have been many kinds of wars, they all share common elements. As Clausewitz argued, war has objective and subjective characteristics. The objective characteristics are the forces identified in the trinity: the force of hostility, the play of probability and chance (this includes the elements of danger, physical exertion, friction, and uncertainty), and the guiding influence of purpose. These three forces are universal. They are the principal elements, or the intrinsic forces, that shape the nature of war. They influence the form and the course of war, or how it unfolds, over time.²⁹ While they are present in all wars, they are also constantly in flux; they vary constantly in intensity and relative importance “from one war to the next, and or even multiple times within the same

²⁸ This is a summation of the various arguments made by Carl von Clausewitz as he developed his theory of war. He argued “War therefore is an act of violence intended to compel our opponent to fulfill our will.” He also argued war “is called forth by a political motive. It is, therefore, a political act.” He added, “War is not merely a political act, but also a real political instrument, a continuation of political commerce, a carrying out of the same by other means.” Finally, he argued that the political object is the goal, that war is the means of reaching it, and that the means (war) can therefore never be considered in isolation from the goal. Carl von Clausewitz, *On War*, translated by Colonel J. J. Graham (New York: Barnes & Noble, 2004), 3, 6, 17, 18, 20, 698.

²⁹ Ibid., 16, 20, 37, 38, 61. Two works by the scholar Antulio Echevarria were instrumental in clarifying for the author what Clausewitz meant when he discussed the objective and subjective characteristics of war: Antulio J. Echevarria II, *Clausewitz and Contemporary War* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), 55-56, 69-78; also Antulio J. Echevarria II, “The Cold War Clausewitz: Reconsidering the Primacy of Policy in *On War*,” in Andreas Herberg-Rothe, Jan Willem Honig and Daniel Moran, eds., *Clausewitz: The State and War* (Stuttgart: Franz Steiner Verlag, 2011), 145-147.

war.”³⁰ They also interact with, and influence, each other. The subjective characteristics of war are the means of a given war. They are the social and political context (which includes culture, society, polity, technology, and armed forces) of the particular time and place, and as such they also influence the form and course of war. The subjective characteristics can also change over time (for example, new weapons can be developed). The objective and subjective characteristics are not separate; they can interact with and influence each other.³¹ This means that war “is more than a simple chameleon.”³² A given war can change in kind, or character, due to changes in the intrinsic forces and changes in means. As the scholar Antulio Echevarria observed, “War can vary in degree so much so that, for all practical purposes, the sum of those variations would amount to changes in kind: we may be involved in a war of minimal violence in one moment, and a war of rapidly escalating violence in the next . . .”³³ As a consequence, how war is fought and how military force is employed (warfare) can also change. This occurred in Afghanistan. Over time, NATO’s ISAF changed what it did in Afghanistan. In part, this was due to a recognition that the character of the conflict changed, but it also resulted from organizational learning. As a consequence, ISAF ended up undertaking a wide range of unexpected missions all of which were oriented on achieving an overarching objective that never changed: to keep Afghanistan from reverting back to becoming a safe haven for transnational Islamic terrorism.

NATO’s continued existence after the Cold War and its efforts to adjust to changing security challenges also reflected another phenomenon of the contemporary international environment – the increasing institutionalization of the international system. State action, even when waging war, has increasingly involved participation in, coordination with, or consideration of, multilateral institutions, and the problem of Islamic terrorism and the war in Afghanistan was no different. After 1945, the United States and its allies purposefully created an international order founded on a diverse array of international political,

³⁰ Echevarria, *Clausewitz and Contemporary War*, 55.

³¹ Clausewitz, *On War*, 16, 20. Also, Echevarria, *Clausewitz and Contemporary War*, 70-78.

³² Echevarria, “The Cold War Clausewitz,” 146.

³³ Ibid.

economic, and security institutions to promote and sustain global peace and stability. The term “international institution” encompassed formal international organizations, regimes, and conventions, such as the UN and NATO, the Bretton Woods monetary and trade regimes, and the Geneva Conventions. The institutions were intended to help states cooperate in advancing common interests and solving problems. U.S. encouragement of, and international receptiveness to, increasing interdependence subsequently led to a virtual explosion in multilateral institutions as states created new ones, or reformed or expanded existing ones.

A number of scholars have analyzed this increasing institutionalization. G. John Ikenberry focused on how it came about and how it persisted. He argued the United States, with its allies, constructed two international orders after 1945: the Western order and the containment order. NATO was anchored in both of them. The Western order was constitutional and was founded on “a dense set of new security, economic, and political institutions.” The containment order was based on balance of power principles. Over time, the Western order expanded and became so firmly rooted that, despite the dissolution of the Soviet Union, the disappearance of the state threat that underpinned the construction of NATO, and the end of the containment order, the Alliance endured.³⁴ In fact, almost all of the former communist states joined the Western order, as well as NATO.

Robert Keohane and Joseph Nye analyzed how increasing institutionalization influenced inter-state relations. They argued states have become increasingly mutually

³⁴ G. John Ikenberry, *After Victory: Institutions, Strategic Restraint, and the Rebuilding of Order After Major Wars* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001), 53-57, 70-71, 163-256. Ikenberry argued the two orders were interrelated. Planning for the Western order began at the 1941 Atlantic Conference and as the order developed after 1945 it initially included only the industrialized democracies (it was also a reaction to the “economic rivalry and political turmoil of the 1930s and resulting world war”). It relied on a “layer cake” structure of regional and global, multilateral and bilateral institutions to create and sustain an open economic order and to preserve international peace and stability. It was also characterized by political reciprocity. The containment order emerged as Western relations with the Soviet Union deteriorated in the late 1940s and the Cold War took hold. This order was based on the balance of power, nuclear deterrence, and political and ideological competition. Ikenberry argued the Cold War and the containment order reinforced the Western order because it reinforced cooperation among the democracies. Furthermore, NATO served a purpose in both orders: to provide a security umbrella to Europe as it rebuilt, to bind the United States to Europe, to allay fears of German *revanchism*, and to balance against the Soviet Union/deter the Soviet Union, and defend Western Europe in the event of a Soviet attack (163-172).

dependent due to modern developments that include technological changes, the information revolution, and economic globalization. Together with the growing network of international institutions states developed “complex networks of relationships” with each other and thus complex interdependence. This unique international system has expanded beyond the industrial democracies and changed traditional power politics. Furthermore, international organizations have a more consequential role because they have become arenas for political bargaining and coalition formation to deal with and address multiple linked issues.³⁵ NATO seemed to assume this role for Afghanistan as its ISAF coalition gathered together a diverse group of allies and partners and coordinated its activities with multiple international political and economic organizations.

The endurance and activities of NATO makes sense in an international system that has been increasingly institutionalized and firmly rooted. In addition, it can be argued NATO’s eventual involvement in the ISAF mission was an understandable response to the contemporary security environment. Individual nations do not have the capacity to deal with complex and transnational threats on their own and so multilateral security organizations like NATO can be useful instruments for states as they respond when the political will for collective action converges among the members and when they are learning organizations capable of military adaptation. This thesis proposes that NATO’s ISAF coalition was likewise an organization capable of learning and adaptation and the proposed analytical framework will identify the drivers and influences that shaped NATO’s initial lack of involvement, then its increasing engagement, and the subsequent changes in ISAF’s structural form and its operational activities. The framework is derived from the social science scholarship that has studied alliances and security organizations: realism, neoliberal institutionalism, collective action theory, and the strategic studies research that focuses on military organizations, change, and adaptation. While none of the current scholarship is sufficient within itself for explaining NATO’s evolving coalition warfare in Afghanistan or

³⁵ Robert O. Keohane and Joseph S. Nye, Jr., *Power and Interdependence*, 4th ed. (Boston: Longman, 2012), xxi-xxviii, 1-10, 16-18, 20-30.

the enduring cohesion, it provides concepts and insights that this thesis synthesizes into the framework.

The Literature.

Realism.

Realist literature analyzes NATO as an alliance operating within the logic of balance of power theory. It generally argues that alliances are security institutions established to respond to an identified powerful state and thus they are a manifestation of balancing. In balance of power theory, the key rule of the game for states in the international system is balancing behavior. Order is achieved in the international system when there is an equilibrium of power among the great powers (the most dominant states in the system), and order is then maintained through continued balancing behavior. Balancing is essentially a process that aims to establish and maintain a given order by threatening potential transgressors with unacceptable costs if they challenge the order. Balance of power theory does not assume peace will result; war may be necessary to maintain the balance. Not only will strong states balance against each other, but weaker states will either flock together (ally together) to balance against stronger states, or they will bandwagon (ally) with stronger states to ensure their survival. Since the relative power of states is constantly changing, realists argue that alliances are also fluid and flexible. States avoid entangling alliances and other international institutions, and they constantly reassess with whom they should align in order to ensure their security and maintain international order.³⁶ Stephen Walt proposed a variation on balance of power theory: he argued that states balance against threat, not power. European countries had allied with the United States in the Cold War due to the greater threat posed by the Soviet Union.³⁷

³⁶ Herbert Butterfield and Martin Wight, eds., *Diplomatic Investigations: Essays in the Theory of International Politics* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1966), 139-147; and T.V. Paul, James L. Wirtz, and Michel Fortmann, eds., *Balance of Power: Theory and Practice in the 21st Century* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2004), 2-7; and Randall L. Schweller, "Bandwagoning for Profit," *International Security*, Vol. 19, No. 1 (Summer 1994): 74, 79, 80, 88, 93. Also, Stephen M. Walt, "Alliances in a Unipolar World," *World Politics*, Vol. 61, No. 1 (January 2009): 94-98, 119.

³⁷ Stephen M. Walt, *The Origins of Alliances* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1990), vi, vii, 31, 32, 263, 274-279.

Many realists also assume that the dominant power is the driving force in the alliance and it will create an institution that serves its interests; other members have no choice but to accept the preferences of the dominant state and do what it wants. They follow the lead of the dominant state, even if it engages in coercive leadership, because they accept the legitimacy of the existing order and they benefit from the public goods provided by the dominant power. Some scholars also conclude that security institutions can endure and evolve if the dominant state wants them to, even with a change in the international distribution of power and threat environment, since it is a mechanism to advance its interests.³⁸ Other realists argue that alliances are difficult to establish and will not endure over the long term because the members remain concerned about relative gains (since today's allies could be tomorrow's enemies) and they fear cheating. They never escape uncertainty about the intentions and commitments of the others, particularly the fear of abandonment or entrapment by allies in a crisis.³⁹ This makes alliance cooperation difficult, since it takes time to coordinate the efforts of the various allies and there can be disagreement about what needs to be done. They also "usually disagree" on the distribution of alliance burdens and members will attempt to free-ride.⁴⁰ That is, members of the alliance can receive security without investing in military capabilities or participating in military

³⁸ Robert Gilpin, *War and Change in World Politics* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1981), 14, 24, 28-36. Also, Jacek Kugler and A.F.K. Organski, "The Power Transition: A Retrospective and Prospective Evaluation," in Manus I. Midlarsky, ed., *Handbook of War Studies* (Boston: Unwin Hyman, 1989), 172-175, 186, 188; and John J. Mearsheimer, "The False Promise of International Institutions," *International Security*, Vol. 19, No. 3 (Winter 1994-95): 13.

³⁹ Joseph Grieco argued that international cooperation is limited by state concerns about cheating (states fear that other states will not honor their obligations) and relative gains (he argued "states worry that today's friend may be tomorrow's enemy in war, and fear that achievements of joint gains that advantage a friend in the present might produce a more dangerous *potential* foe in the future." Joseph M. Grieco, "Anarchy and the Limits of Cooperation: A Realist Critique of the Newest Liberal Institutionalism," *International Organization*, Vol. 42 (Summer 1988): 485-507. Also, Mearsheimer, "The False Promise of International Institutions," 10-13, 18-19; and John J. Mearsheimer, *The Tragedy of Great Power Politics* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 2001), 32-33, 51-52, 156-157. This argument was more recently reiterated by Evan N. Resnick, "Hang Together or Hang Separately? Evaluating Rival Theories of Wartime Alliance Cohesion," *Security Studies*, Vol. 22, No. 4 (October-December 2013): 673, 674, 678, 680.

⁴⁰ Mearsheimer, *The Tragedy of Great Power Politics*, 156-157. Free-riding behavior is a concept proposed by Mancur Olson. It is a phenomenon whereby members have an interest in the organization's collective benefit, but they have no common interest in paying the cost of the benefit, in fact they prefer for others to pay the cost. Since most organizations have no means to enforce payment/contributions, members can get away with not paying. Mancur Olson, *The Logic of Collective Action: Public Goods and the Theory of Groups* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1965 and 1971), 14-15, 21, 28.

action in the event of a war. Furthermore, with the disappearance of an identified opponent, the alliance will disintegrate, although the decline may be slow if the institution is highly bureaucratized.

Many realists argue that the creation and/or endurance of security institutions that are not oriented toward a particular powerful state are not possible, will not endure, and will not be able to act. As such, a number of scholars predicted NATO would disintegrate due to the collapse of the Soviet Union and end of the Cold War, including John Mearsheimer, Richard Betts, and Stephen Walt.⁴¹ Others argued that if it endured, it would nonetheless become irrelevant: Seth Jones and Sean Kay.⁴²

Others scholars were less pessimistic and applied realist premises to their analysis of NATO in Afghanistan. Galia Press-Barnathan argued the European allies used NATO-ISAF in 2003 to serve two functions: restrain U.S. policy and actions in Afghanistan and implement a division-of-labor strategy to execute long-term state-building in the country. She argued this solved the European “alliance security dilemma” which related to allied concerns about either entrapment or abandonment by the United States.⁴³ Thomas Mowle and David Sacko argued that in a unipolar world the United States does not need alliances. This is why OEF was a U.S. coalition rather than a NATO coalition (the United States did not want to be constrained by allies). They explained European support for operations in Afghanistan as due to bandwagoning behavior with the most powerful state in the international system.⁴⁴ M. J. Williams examined the failures of peacebuilding in Afghanistan. He argued NATO and other international institutions were created to reduce

⁴¹ John J. Mearsheimer, “Back to the Future: Instability in Europe After the Cold War,” *International Security*, Vol. 15, No. 1 (Summer 1990): 52; John J. Mearsheimer, “The Future of the American Pacifier,” *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 80, No. 5 (September/October 2001): 47; Mearsheimer, “The False Promise of International Institutions,” 14; and Mearsheimer, *The Tragedy of Great Power Politics*, 378-379. Richard K. Betts, “Systems for Peace or Causes of War? Collective Security, Arms Control, and the New Europe,” *International Security*, Vol. 17, No. 1 (Summer 1992): 15. Walt, *The Origins of Alliances*, vii, 31.

⁴² Seth Jones, *The Rise of European Security Cooperation* (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 5, 8-11, 32, 55. Sean Kay, *NATO and the Future of European Security* (New York: Rowman & Littlefield, 1998), 1-11

⁴³ Galia Press-Barnathan, “Managing the Hegemon: NATO Under Unipolarity,” *Security Studies*, Vol. 15, No. 2 (April-June 2006): 271-274, 298-300.

⁴⁴ Thomas S. Mowle and David H. Sacko, “Global NATO: Bandwagoning in a Unipolar World,” *Contemporary Security Policy*, Vol. 28, No. 3 (December 2007): 603-605, 609.

the likelihood of war by maintaining the balance of power, they have not adapted well enough to a security environment where the lack of power is a concern of states and where state-building is increasingly required, and so it is not surprising that NATO (and the rest of the international community) has been unsuccessful.⁴⁵ Sten Rynning argued NATO “lost its balance” in Afghanistan because it focused too much on liberal convictions rather than on national interests. This led to near mission failure in 2007-2008, but it managed to change course and “step back from the brink.” He concluded the Alliance needed to rebalance – ensure the proper mix of liberal values and interests – because its true purpose is to sustain the European regional order.⁴⁶ Péter Marton and Nik Hynek analyzed burden-sharing in ISAF between 2006 and 2011. They argued a country’s level of troop contribution was related to the intensity of its threat perception and its relative need to bandwagon with NATO for security reasons.⁴⁷ More recently, Patricia Weitsman argued that the problems associated with complex command structures, the lack of unity of command, differing national caveats, and disparities in troop levels and casualty rates “dramatically undermined” cohesion in OEF and ISAF. However, she defines cohesion as “the ability of states to agree on goals and strategies to attain those goals” and she does not relate her definition to the problems she identifies.⁴⁸ In a context of decreasing cohesion, she otherwise does not address how it was then possible for ISAF to expand to 50 nations.

Thus far, no realist has provided a general explanation for how and why ISAF’s missions evolved and expanded over the course of more than a decade despite a large imbalance in the distribution of costs and burdens, and what could be called shirking behavior. They also have not explained why no ally abandoned NATO’s commitment to

⁴⁵ M. J. Williams, “(Un)Sustainable Peacebuilding: NATO’s Suitability for Postconflict Reconstruction in Multiactor Environments,” *Global Governance*, Vol. 17, No. 1 (January-March 2011): 115-117, 121-122, 129-130. Williams expanded his argument into a book: *The Good War: NATO and the Liberal Conscience in Afghanistan* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011).

⁴⁶ Sten Rynning, *NATO in Afghanistan: The Liberal Disconnect* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2012), 2-6, 21, 110, 213-216

⁴⁷ Péter Marton and Nik Hynek, “What Makes ISAF S/tick: An Investigation of the Politics of Coalition Burden-Sharing,” *Defence Studies*, Vol. 12, No. 4 (December 2012): 539-542, 545.

⁴⁸ Patricia A. Weitsman, *Waging War: Alliances, Coalitions, and Institutions of Interstate Violence* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2014), 105, 110, 122, 123, 129-130.

Afghanistan - especially when its involvement was not predicated on the balancing logic or the threat posed by an aggressive state - or why so many allies and partners stayed engaged for so long. Realists struggle to explain NATO and ISAF's adaptation to contemporary, especially non-state, security threats. However, realist scholarship highlights what this thesis terms "fraying forces," or the forces that undermine coalition cohesion: ally and partner fears about cheating and free-riding behavior, uncertainty about the intentions and commitments of others, fear of abandonment in a crisis or entrapment in another state's war, disagreements over burden-sharing, and disagreements on what needs to be done or how to do it.

Neoliberal Institutionalism.

The neoliberal institutionalism literature focuses on the institutional aspects of NATO. In general, institutional theorists argue that states create international institutions when their interests converge and when they think they can benefit from cooperation. International institutions are defined as "persistent and connected sets of rules (formal and informal) that prescribe behavioral roles, constrain activity, and shape expectations." They can take various forms: formal intergovernmental or nongovernmental organizations, international regimes, or conventions.⁴⁹ Some theorists assume international institutions will do what they are created to do, but others do not. This is related to the fact that they are not autonomous.⁵⁰ A number of scholars have argued international institutions are not static; they can change and evolve for a number of reasons (power shift, threat shift, norm shift, or organizational learning) – although change is often difficult and slow.⁵¹ Various scholars

⁴⁹ Robert O. Keohane and Lisa L. Martin, "Institutional Theory as a Research Program," in Colin Elman and Miriam Fendius Elman, eds., *Progress in International Relations Theory: Appraising the Field* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2003), 78, 83, 88.

⁵⁰ Barbara Koremenos, Charles Lipson, and Duncan Snidal, "The Rational Design of International Institutions," *International Organization*, Vol. 55, No. 4 (Autumn 2001): 762. Robert O. Keohane, *International Institutions and State Power: Essays in International Relations Theory* (San Francisco: Westview Press, 1989), 5-7.

⁵¹ Koremenos, Lipson, and Snidal, "The Rational Design of International Institutions," 762, 767. Celeste A. Wallander, "Institutional Assets and Adaptability: NATO After the Cold War," *International Organization*, Vol. 54, No. 4 (Autumn 2000): 705, 707. Robert B. McCalla, "NATO's persistence after the cold war," *International Organization*, Vol. 50, No. 3 (Summer 1996): 457, 470. John Gerard Ruggie, "International regimes, transactions, and change: embedded liberalism in the

have analyzed the factors driving institutional effectiveness and why international institutions persist, despite changes in power and/or security threats.⁵²

Robert Keohane has focused extensively on international institutions and regimes, studying their formation, their evolution and persistence, and the mechanisms by which they facilitate cooperation among states. He acknowledged the role of international structure and the distribution of power in their creation and he agreed that relative power relationships can be important determinants of the characteristics and actions of specific institutions (although he also argued that collective action and cooperation are possible in the absence of a dominant state). The preferences of the more powerful states will tend to have more weight, although weaker states (which are more constrained) still retain their ability to choose whether they will join an institution or not, whether they will remain in the institution, and whether they will honor their commitments. He argued that international institutions are not supranational enforcers of their rules and that rules are often broken or bent, but he maintained the mechanisms of reciprocity and information provision increase the probability states will obey the rules and honor their commitments. He has explained the persistence of international institutions, despite changes in international conditions, as due to the value they acquire relative to the functions they serve. Persistence is also tied to sunk costs. It is easier to maintain and modify an existing institution than to disband it and build a new one, given the difficulty of constructing an institution in the first place. He also agreed with Mancur Olson's collective action logic - he argued that international institutions with smaller memberships are more likely to overcome collective action problems and be useful and effective.⁵³

postwar economic order," in Stephen D. Krasner, ed., *International Regimes* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1983), 195-200.

⁵² Stephan Haggard and Beth A. Simmons, "Theories of international regimes," *International Organization*, Vol. 41, No. 3 (Summer 1987): 508-509. G. John Ikenberry, "Institutions, Strategic Restraint, and the Persistence of American Postwar Order," *International Security*, Vol. 23, No. 3 (Winter 1998-1999): 46, 68, 71. Wallander, "Institutional Assets and Adaptability," 705-706, 731. McCalla, "NATO's persistence after the cold war," 446, 457. Stephen D. Krasner, "Structural causes and regime consequences: regimes as intervening variables," in Krasner, ed., *International Regimes*, 2-5, 16.

⁵³ Robert O. Keohane, "The demand for international regimes," *International Organization*, Vol. 36, No. 2 (Spring 1982): 330-332, 342-345; and Robert O. Keohane, *After Hegemony: Cooperation and*

Institutional analysis of NATO in the post-Cold War era has been extensive. Scholars examined its new missions, new strategic concept, and military operations in the Balkans.⁵⁴ They analyzed how its institutional assets, such as political consultation mechanisms, the integrated command structure, and the bureaucracy itself, enabled adaptation to the changed security environment.⁵⁵ Given its endurance and expansion in activity, Keohane, Celeste Wallander, and Helga Haftendorn proposed that NATO had changed from being an alliance to a security management institution.⁵⁶

Scholarship on NATO in Afghanistan includes Sarah Kreps' analysis of the sustainment of troop contributions in Afghanistan despite a lack of public support. She argued it was due to elite consensus and the systemic pressures of the formal alliance which were the high cost of defection and the desire not to forgo future benefits.⁵⁷ Sean Kay and Sahar Khan identified institutional factors that made the execution of counter-insurgency difficult for NATO in 2006: lack of force generation mechanism, no way to guarantee members would deliver the forces they promised, national caveats, and no Alliance counter-insurgency doctrine.⁵⁸ Joshua W. Walker noted changes in NATO roles and missions after 9/11 and argued the Alliance's success in Afghanistan was crucial for its organizational survival.⁵⁹ Alexandra Gheciu argued NATO's change in identity and its evolution into an organization that does peace-building has led to contestation and competition with other

Discord in the World Political Economy (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1984), 14, 50, 71, 72, 76, 77, 107, 246.

⁵⁴ Ikenberry, *After Victory*, 4-10, 17, 70, 233-239, 248. John S. Duffield, "NATO's Functions after the Cold War," *Political Science Quarterly*, Vol. 109, No. 5 (Winter 1994-1995):763-770. Rebecca R. Moore, *NATO's New Mission: Projecting Stability in a Post-Cold War World* (Westport, CT: Praeger Security International, 2007), 1-2, 6-7, 28-31.

⁵⁵ Wallander, "Institutional Assets and Adaptability," 705-707, 724-725, 731-732. McCalla, "NATO's persistence after the cold war," 446-447, 456-460, 465, 471.

⁵⁶ Helga Haftendorn, Robert O. Keohane, and Celeste A. Wallander, eds., *Imperfect Unions: Security Institutions over Time and Space* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), 2, 5, 11-12, 22-27, 32-37.

⁵⁷ Sarah Kreps, "Elite Consensus as a Determinant of Alliance Cohesion: Why Public Opinion Hardly Matters for NATO-led Operations in Afghanistan," *Foreign Policy Analysis*, Vol. 6, No. 3 (July 2010): 191-192, 203.

⁵⁸ Sean Kay and Sahar Khan, "NATO and Counter-insurgency: Strategic Liability or Tactical Asset?" *Contemporary Security Policy*, Vol. 28, No. 1 (April 2007): 163-166, 169, 177-178.

⁵⁹ Joshua W. Walker, "Nato's litmus test: Prioritizing Afghanistan," *Journal of Transatlantic Studies*, Vol. 5, No. 2 (2007): 170, 176-177.

international organizations which jeopardizes the prospects for success in Afghanistan.⁶⁰

Andrew T. Wolff argued NATO operations in Afghanistan have led to internal institutional instability and political tensions because there is an intrinsic conflict between its two main missions: warfare and state-building.⁶¹ Finally, Anand Menon and Jennifer Welsh argued organizational adaptation can lead to intra-institutional conflict. They asserted peace operations in Afghanistan have given rise to distributional conflicts and fights over burden-sharing and this “could significantly reduce the likelihood the alliance members would agree to expansive out-of-area operations in the future.”⁶²

In general, institutional scholars have made a number of relevant arguments about NATO’s enduring value to states as a mechanism to solve problems, they have analyzed its persistence and adaptability, and they have highlighted potential obstacles to collective action. In general, the literature focuses internally, on interaction among the members. It explains how information sharing and reciprocity reduce uncertainty about the intentions and behaviors of the members. Furthermore, while they highlight the political tensions and internal conflicts over burden-sharing generated by operations in Afghanistan, they do not examine why this did not lead to defection. Finally, no one has focused on ISAF operations in Afghanistan over the entire time of the Alliance’s involvement or analyzed its wide range in coalition warfare or proposed an explanation for how and why it evolved over time.

Collective Action Theory.

As indicated earlier, some realist and institutional theorizing incorporated the insights of collective action theory. Mancur Olson’s logic of collective action asserts that although all the members are interested in the collective benefit provided by their organization, they have no common interest in paying the cost of the benefit. Each member would prefer that the others pay the cost (and thus free-ride). Additionally, as most

⁶⁰ Alexandra Gheciu, “Divided Partners: The Challenges of NATO-NGO Cooperation in Peacebuilding Operations,” *Global Governance*, Vol. 17, No. 1 (January-March 2011): 95-98, 106.

⁶¹ Andrew T. Wolff, “The structural and political crisis of NATO transformation,” *Journal of Transatlantic Studies*, Vol. 7, No. 4 (December 2009): 476, 483-484.

⁶² Anand Menon and Jennifer Welsh, “Understanding NATO’s Sustainability: The Limits of Institutional Theory,” *Global Governance*, Vol. 17, No. 1 (January-March 2011): 81-82, 89-90.

organizations have limited (or no) mechanisms to punish free-riders, members are ordinarily able to receive the collective benefits whether they pay part of the cost or not. Olson argued that in general once a member's marginal costs exceed its share of the benefits derived from the organization, it will stop contributing. As a result, the group optimum is never reached in the provision of the public good provided by the organization and the distribution of the burden will be highly arbitrary. He argued that as organizations grow in membership the free-riding problem increases and organizational effectiveness declines. However, Olson also argued that the free-rider and collective action problem can be overcome if there are members who calculate they are better off if the collective good is provided, even if they have to pay the entire cost of providing it themselves.⁶³ In other words, he recognized that state preferences can vary, and that a state can have a high interest in the collective good provided by an organization. If so, there is the possibility that some members will calculate their gain from the provision of the collective good is so significant that they will decide to pay a disproportionate share of the cost. Furthermore, it is more likely the more powerful states in the organization will volunteer to pay the disproportionate cost since they have greater capabilities and contribute more to the organization.

In the case of NATO, the public good provided by the organization is security. By Olson's logic, the organization should have become less likely and less effective at providing security outcomes the more members it gained. He also implied that an imbalanced and highly arbitrary distribution of costs and burdens would inhibit security provision. Additionally, for Olson, NATO's optimal provision of security depends on one, or a few, of its members deciding to pay a disproportionate share of the costs and bearing a disproportionate share of the burdens. While Olson provides insights about how organizations, especially large ones, can become increasingly inefficient, his logic cannot account for NATO's extensive military activities in Afghanistan, or how and why ISAF changed what it did over the years. It also does not take into account the fact that organizations can engage in a wide range of activity and it may not be useful or necessary

⁶³ Olson, *The Logic of Collective Action*, 2, 14-15, 21-22, 27-36, 45.

for all members to participate equally, especially in a security environment that has a wide range of state, non-state, and transnational threats. Thus for an organization like NATO, security goods could be effectively delivered without 100 percent or equal participation; free-riding does not necessarily pose a problem. Olson's logic cannot account for the fact that all the members of the Alliance stayed engaged in Afghanistan – even as its membership grew from 19 in 2001 to 28 in 2009 – or the fact that non-NATO partners also chose to participate in Afghanistan and also stayed engaged.

A number of the scholars cited above have been grouped together and identified as “alliance theorists” due to their specific interest in and study of alliances: Walt, Weitsman, Olson, and Rynning (other scholars included in the alliance scholarship grouping are Glenn Snyder, Bruce Russett, and Ole Hosti, but they have not studied NATO in Afghanistan). These scholars represent the perspectives of different schools of thought in political science. In general, according to Mark Webber, their scholarship focuses primarily on alliance formation and disintegration, and much of it predates NATO or does not extend past the Cold War. It is also static. It may describe “at what point of development an alliance may be at but not how it got there or where it might be going.” Additionally, “the issue of long-term change is only addressed indirectly or incompletely.”⁶⁴

Military Organizations, Change, and Adaptation.

According to Theo Farrell, scholarship dedicated to analyzing change in military organizations, in times of war and peace, emerged in the 1980s and has since become a rich field of research.⁶⁵ The scholarship primarily analyzes change, innovation, and adaptation in specific Western national defense establishments: ground, air, and naval forces. Williamson Murray studied the American, British, French, and German militaries during the First and Second World Wars, as well as the Israel Defense Forces in the Yom Kippur War. While noting that adaptation occurred under combat pressures, he highlighted the factors that made

⁶⁴ Mark Webber, “NATO after 9/11: Theoretical Perspectives,” in Ellen Hallams, Luca Ratti, and Benjamin Zyla, eds., *NATO beyond 9/11: The Transformation of the Atlantic Alliance* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013), 31.

⁶⁵ Theo Farrell, “Introduction: Military Adaptation in War,” in Theo Farrell, Frans Osinga, and James A. Russell, eds., *Military Adaptation in Afghanistan* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2013), 6.

it difficult: bureaucratic resistance, human failings, and the nature of war itself (friction, chance, enemy actions, and physical, psychological, and intellectual challenges).⁶⁶ Barry Posen analyzed innovation in the British, French, and German militaries during the interwar period. He argued military organizations innovate after failure (military defeat) and they innovate when civilians intervene.⁶⁷ Stephen Rosen analyzed the American and British militaries during and after the First and Second World Wars and he argued the process of military innovation, i.e., major changes in the way militaries fight, is different during peacetime and wartime. In wartime, it involves “new organizational tasks and concepts of operation,” and it results after the strategic measures of effectiveness are redefined, which allows relevant organizational learning and thus innovation.⁶⁸ Deborah Avant expanded the types of wars analyzed by examining “low-tech” or peripheral wars: the U.S. army in Vietnam and the British army in Malaya and the Boer War. She argued that the structure of civilian political institutions (parliamentary vs. presidential systems) and the way civilian leaders chose to set up and oversee the military influenced the respective army’s ability to adapt.⁶⁹ As the new millennium dawned, Farrell and Terry Terriff observed major military changes occurring around the world and they argued the sources for it were cultural norms, politics and strategy, and new technology. They defined major military change as the adoption of new military goals, new strategies, and new military organizational structures. Furthermore, they argued there are three pathways for change: innovation, adaptation, and emulation.⁷⁰ More recently, a number of scholars collaborated in an effort to analyze the military transformation efforts of six NATO members (Britain, France, Germany, Spain, the Netherlands, and Poland) as they endeavored in the early 2000s to close the “transformation

⁶⁶ Williamson Murray, *Military Adaptation in War: With Fear of Change* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 1-8, 16-21, 117-118, 151, 262, 263.

⁶⁷ Barry P. Posen, *The Sources of Military Doctrine: France, Britain, and Germany Between the World Wars* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1984), 30, 41, 57, 79.

⁶⁸ Stephen Peter Rosen, *Winning the Next War: Innovation and the Modern Military* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1991), 1-7, 34-39, 52.

⁶⁹ Deborah D. Avant, *Political Institutions and Military Change: Lessons from Peripheral Wars* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1994), 1-4, 15, 18, 35, 40, 102.

⁷⁰ Theo Farrell and Terry Terriff, eds., *The Sources of Military Change: Culture, Politics, Technology* (Boulder: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 2002), 3-6, 16.

gap” with the United States. In the volume, the concept of transformation was broken down into technological, doctrinal, and organizational innovations in the various nations’ armed forces.⁷¹ Finally, James Russell and Chad Serena analyzed the U.S. Army and Marine Corps in Iraq during *Operation Iraqi Freedom*. They both argued that an operational imperative, the emergence of the Iraqi insurgency, was the main driver for adaptation and innovation, and more importantly the military change process was not directed from above (from either higher level military headquarters or civilian authorities), but rather occurred at the tactical level (in battalions and brigades) as the conflict degenerated. Russell argued it was an ad hoc and “iterative process of organically generated tactical adaptation and innovation that unfolded over time in a distinctive progression.” They both observed that this process occurred before the new American counter-insurgency doctrine was published and it resulted in the creation of new organizational structures, new missions and new ways of fighting, new operating procedures, and new training and educational programs.⁷²

Terriff expanded analysis of military adaptation to NATO in his evaluation of the Alliance’s strategic-level efforts to transform itself to meet the challenges of the post-9/11 security environment and to close the capabilities gap that had emerged between the United States and its allies. The transformation involved the development of new strategic concepts, new doctrine, new military capabilities to undertake new missions, new exercise and training initiatives, and new organizations to conduct expeditionary operations (the NATO Response Force) and to manage the transformation effort (Allied Command Transformation or ACT). He concluded that after ten years of effort, 2002-2012, progress had been limited because the member states had different understandings of what transformation entailed, the ACT lacked the authority to compel military policy or transformation efforts at the national

⁷¹ Terry Terriff, Frans Osinga, and Theo Farrell, eds., *A Transformation Gap? American Innovations and European Military Change* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2010), 1-7.

⁷² James A. Russell, *Innovation, Transformation, and War: Counterinsurgency Operations in Anbar and Ninewa Provinces, Iraq, 2005-2007* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2011), 2-4, 7-9, 17. Chad C. Serena, *A Revolution in Military Adaptation: The US Army in the Iraq War* (Washington, DC: Georgetown University Press, 2011), 2, 4, 73, 160, 165.

level within member nations, and the 2008-2009 financial crisis led to austerity conditions and reduced defense budgets across the continent.⁷³

Analysis of military adaptation in Afghanistan includes Farrell's study of the British in Helmand Province, 2006-2009. He argued that operational challenges generated bottom-up efforts by the successive rotations of British task forces to develop a winning strategy against the Taliban. The forces adapted from relying heavily on combat power to a population-centric approach that relied on influence operations and non-kinetic activities.⁷⁴ In the book *Military Adaptation in Afghanistan*, Farrell proposes two drivers (operational challenges and new technologies) that interact with four shapers (domestic politics, alliance politics, strategic culture, and civil-military relations) which he and a number of fellow scholars use to explain strategic and operational adaptation by the armies of the UK, U.S., Canada, Denmark, Germany, and the Netherlands over the course of their involvement in Afghanistan.⁷⁵ Farrell and Rynning examined the effect of military adaptation in Afghanistan on NATO's transformation efforts. They argued NATO-ISAF operations have led to a divergence in member state transformation efforts, which has generated a gap in U.S. and European capabilities, and this threatens to derail the organization's transformation.⁷⁶

Scholars have proposed a wide variety of explanations for military change, innovation, and adaptation, or the lack thereof, during peacetime and war but the scholarship primarily focuses on the national defense establishments (ground, air, and naval forces) of individual nations. Adam Grissom also observed that the military change and innovation literature primarily provides top-down accounts of military change. Innovation occurs because senior civilian or military leaders propel change in bureaucratic organizations that

⁷³ Terry Terriff, "Déjà vu all over again? 11 September 2001 and NATO Military Transformation," in Hallams, Ratti, and Zyla, eds., *NATO beyond 9/11*, 92-97, 99, 102, 105, 110-111.

⁷⁴ Theo Farrell, "Improving in War: Military Adaptation and the British in Helmand Province, Afghanistan, 2006-2009," *Journal of Strategic Studies*, Vol. 33, No. 4 (August 2010): 573-582.

⁷⁵ Farrell, "Introduction," in Farrell, Osinga, and Russell, eds., *Military Adaptation in Afghanistan*, 1-3, 8-10.

⁷⁶ Theo Farrell and Sten Rynning, "NATO's Transformation Gaps: Transatlantic Differences and the War in Afghanistan," *Journal of Strategic Studies*, Vol. 33, No. 5 (October 2010): 674, 680-682, 688, 692.

are resistant to it. However, Grissom observed there is empirical evidence that change can occur from the bottom-up,⁷⁷ which the analysis by Russell, Serena, and Farrell mentioned above confirms. Furthermore, while scholars do not agree on the sources of change, they have observed that military change can result in new strategy, new organizational structures, new missions and new ways of fighting, new doctrine and operating procedures, and new exercise, training, and educational programs. Unfortunately, there is almost no analysis of military adaptation in the course of multinational coalition operations which is the central focus of this thesis.

Research Question and Analytical Framework.

As stated earlier, the question under examination in this thesis pertains to NATO, ISAF, and Afghanistan: *NATO was not initially involved in military operations in Afghanistan, but this changed slowly over time. First, it decided to take over ISAF in Kabul, and then it expanded ISAF, both geographically and operationally. ISAF then surged, followed by an organized withdrawal. Why did this happen and how did ISAF maintain coalition cohesion throughout the campaign in Afghanistan?*

The thesis' main focus is at the operational level. For this thesis, the operational level entails command and control structures that integrate multinational military contributions and manage, direct, and coordinate military activities in a specific geographic area, or theatre of operations. In addition, operational level commanders and their staff translate strategic-level direction into campaigns and major operations (this is known as operational art). The operational level links higher-level direction and objectives to tactical activities. In Afghanistan, ISAF was the operational level headquarters that provided goals, objectives, and plans which were meant to orient the tactical level activities of battle groups, PRTs, and embedded trainers.⁷⁸ The thesis analyzes the decision process in the lead up to

⁷⁷ Adam Grissom, "The Future of Military Innovation Studies," *Journal of Strategic Studies*, Vol. 29, No. 5 (October 2006): 905, 908, 919-922.

⁷⁸ For the last few decades there has been a debate about whether the operational level is still relevant in the post-Cold War era due to the changing character of war. Martin van Creveld opened the debate in 1991 with his argument that state-on-state conflict was "on its way out" due to the rise of low-intensity conflict, especially terrorism. As such, conventional armies would "wither away" and

NATO taking over the ISAF mission and then the organizational changes that occurred within the coalition over time, specifically, the changes in ISAF's organizational structure and the extensive changes and expansion in ISAF's actual operations. It can be argued that ISAF underwent a dramatic transformation, both structurally and operationally, over the time of its existence. This helped sustain the members' political commitment and enabled the coalition to stay the course in the face of adverse and unexpected conditions, as well as overcome the fraying forces that undermined cohesion. Since ISAF was not an autonomous entity, its examination requires two levels of analysis – the strategic level at NATO and the operational level at ISAF. The levels were inextricably linked. Political authorities in the North Atlantic Council (NAC) decided whether and when to commit the Alliance in Afghanistan. The NAC also issued political direction to ISAF. The military authorities at Supreme Headquarters Allied Powers Europe (SHAPE) and Joint Force Command (JFC) Brunssum issued strategic and operational direction. While ISAF had wide latitude in translating the higher level direction into plans and operations, the NATO political and military authorities retained final approval authority over ISAF's successive campaign plans. In addition, the Alliance's various structural elements, such as training facilities, educational programs, and force generation processes, supported the coalition's activities.

conventional campaigns and the associated operational level of war would become obsolete as battles were "replaced by skirmishes, bombings, and massacres." Van Creveld, *On Future War*, 192, 194, 207. More recently, Robert Foley built on van Creveld's argument about the obsolescence of the operational level by adding that national mass armies no longer exist and political and strategic circumstances have radically changed how force is used. In Afghanistan, he maintained the small contributions many states made to ISAF were political signals and rather than serving a military operational purpose they performed a strategic role. Robert T. Foley, "Operational Level and Operational Art: Still Useful Today?" *Defence-in-Depth*, September 14, 2015, <https://defenceindepth.co/2015/09>. Stuart Griffin counter-argued that the operational level may not be required or relevant in all cases today, but it is still relevant for some military operations. For example, even small national contributions to ISAF had to integrate into the larger coalition force and they needed guidance in order to be effective. The ISAF headquarters served as an operational level entity that integrated all the multinational forces into the larger operational plan. All national militaries must therefore understand the operational level (and operational art) if their contributions are to be meaningful and if they are to operate effectively in contemporary multinational coalitions. Stuart Griffin, "Operational Art and the Operational Level: The Case for the Defence," *Defence-in-Depth*, September 16, 2015, <https://defenceindepth.co/2015/09>. The ongoing debate had no meaningful impact on operations in Afghanistan as the operational level continued to function as the key to the overall effort. Furthermore, this was also the level where the thesis' main claims can best be seen to hold true.

Analyzing the ISAF coalition, therefore, requires maintaining an eye on relevant strategic-level developments in NATO.

Since NATO's involvement in Afghanistan and ISAF's transformation was essentially a case of multinational military adaptation, this thesis draws on concepts and insights from the literature described above to develop an analytical framework that identifies the main drivers and influences which shaped NATO's involvement, ISAF's adaptation to the war over time, and the sustainment of cohesion as the conflict changed. The drivers are political will and organizational capacity.

Political Will. As the international institutions literature observes, security organizations require effort on the part of the member states for action to occur because they are not autonomous. In this case, political will manifests as national policy that is related to NATO. Political will is expressed in public statements and the subsequent activation of Alliance decision forums, persuasion efforts with other members to achieve consensus on an organizational policy or action, and physical contributions, such as defense spending, equipment acquisition, and providing military forces through the force generation process for the activation and sustainment of operational missions. Political will must also converge among the members in order for Alliance action to occur. In effect, the convergence of political will generates a decision for operational action and its subsequent sustainment over time.

The national policy positions (political will) of the members of NATO can vary widely and they can shift over time as strategic, or domestic, conditions change. Political will is therefore shaped, or influenced, by alliance politics and domestic politics. Alliance politics has to do with multilateral deliberation, compromise, and constraints since each member can have different priorities and interests. Working with and depending on allies can slow down decision-making, narrow the range of potential actions, and slow the process of adaptation because of the fears identified by realists: burden-sharing concerns, and fears of entrapment or abandonment. In addition, allies may be trying to achieve different agendas within the Alliance. The aspirant countries and new members of NATO may have different

reasons for supporting Alliance action than the long-standing members. For example, Germany prefers multilateral frameworks for the use of force, so NATO's credibility and survival are important to it as a means to constrain U.S. unilateralism. The aspirants and new members want international protection in the event of Russian aggression so they also want NATO to succeed and endure, but for their own survival.

The tug and pull of domestic politics also influences political will and member state decisions about NATO's operational activities and the level of their contributions to them. Decisions to employ military force are especially contentious for many European countries for reasons of history. Scholars like John Mueller and James Sheehan have documented the rise of war aversion in the aftermath of the First and Second World Wars such that war is no longer perceived as a legitimate instrument of policy in many European societies.⁷⁹ This means national policy-makers have to consider the level of public support they may or may not have for a military mission. It also influences what policy-makers will commit to an operation and how they will describe their contribution. For example, some countries may only commit forces for humanitarian or stabilization operations, and they may emphasize the peace-building aspects of the mission over the more kinetic activities. National parliaments may also play a constraining or supporting role, such as approving resources or introducing strict national caveats, depending on their oversight authority. Finally, financial conditions can greatly influence the degree of a nation's contribution. The global financial crisis in 2008-2009 and subsequent austerity budgets in many European countries imposed constraints on the resources available for military operations.

Organizational capacity. Organizational capacity provides the ability for a multinational coalition to act once a decision is made and then adjust as necessary. This driver is deduced from the military adaptation literature and has both concrete and abstract attributes. The concrete attributes are primarily structural and they include: strategy and

⁷⁹ John Mueller, *Quiet Cataclysm: Reflections on the Recent Transformation of World Politics* (New York: HarperCollins, 1995), 6, 112, 121-126. James J. Sheehan, *Where Have All the Soldiers Gone? The Transformation of Modern Europe* (New York: Houghton Mifflin Company, 2008), xvi-xvii, 221, 223.

planning documents; decision and planning bodies; military resources (compatible forces, military budgets, and/or equipment acquisition plans); unified or compatible doctrine and operating procedures; combined education, training, and exercises; and deployable elements.

The concrete attributes are related to each other. At NATO, the permanent decision body is the NAC and it is meant to enable consultation and decision-making in the event of a crisis, or the emergence of a new threat. NAC decisions can activate planning activities, strategy development, and force generation processes which build the specific force packages needed for a given operation. The Alliance's published strategy document identifies the purpose and roles of the organization. It articulates the organization's missions and the forms of coalition warfare it will undertake to deal with the threats and challenges facing its members. Strategy influences doctrine, planning activities, force structure (numbers and types of troops and equipment needed), military budgets, and equipment acquisition plans. Regularized Alliance staff planning, educational programs, the execution of periodic training and exercise programs, and the encouragement of national modernization programs are intended to produce compatible and interoperable military forces. They also build trust among the members and can lessen free-riding behavior in the event the organization deploys forces. Finally, the organization's deployable elements can become the command and control (C2) structures in operational theaters. Member state force contributions fall in under, and integrate into, these C2 structures. In general, NATO's structural elements would support the operational activities of multinational coalitions like ISAF and when learning occurs in conflict they could generate strategic-level changes and adaptations that support operational-level actions and changes.

Structural attributes in coalitions like ISAF would include decision and planning bodies embedded in both the headquarters and subordinate commands. Their primary purpose would be to prepare for, plan, conduct, and evaluate operations. They would publish campaign plans that identify the coalition's operational missions and the objectives it was trying to achieve. The plans could also be revised if the coalition assesses its activities

are not having the desired operational effect. That is, campaign plans can change if the coalition has the capacity to learn and subsequently adjust what it is doing. Coalitions like ISAF could also establish common operating procedures and incorporate training programs and exercises to prepare for operational missions and to build trust and increase interoperability; these would contribute to building operational cohesion.

The abstract attributes of organizational capacity are strategic culture, the ability to learn, and experience operating together; they are linked to the concrete attributes. Strategic culture refers to beliefs about the use of force and frames how the organization sees the world and sees itself. As such, the beliefs, or norms, the organization and its members share prescribe when and how military force can be used.⁸⁰ For NATO, they also prescribe the Alliance's geographic range of action. They are physically expressed, or articulated, in the organization's strategy documents and campaign plans. Strategic culture is not static, it can change as the strategic environment shifts and as members' conceptions about what constitutes the legitimate use of force evolve, but it can be difficult. NATO's strategic culture during the Cold War encompassed a defensive strategic concept oriented on deterring conventional or nuclear war. Geographically, Alliance activity would occur only within the territory of the member nations. The collapse of the Soviet Union and the emergence of new security threats opened a debate on NATO's purpose and whether it should operate out-of-area. This debate is ongoing, even as the Alliance's strategic culture evolved and NATO undertook a wide range of new missions (peace support, stabilization, and humanitarian) and incrementally shifted from operations on the periphery of member territory to global operations.

Military and security organizations operate in a dynamic environment. To retain their value for their members, they must have the ability to learn and to recognize when they are in a new situation or when they face unprecedented problems. Organizational learning

⁸⁰ This conceptualization of strategic culture is derived from Ronald Jepperson, Alexander Wendt, and Peter Katzenstein, "Norms, Identity, and Culture in National Security," in Peter J. Katzenstein, ed., *The Culture of National Security: Norms and Identity in World Politics* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1996), 54 and Farrell, "Introduction," in Farrell, Osinga, and Russell, eds., *Military Adaptation in Afghanistan*, 14-15.

requires a level of self-reflection and open-mindedness since it requires members to acknowledge their beliefs about the appropriate way to resolve a problem or achieve an objective are wrong. Learning during conflict may also be incremental due to the reciprocal nature of war. Learning is a cyclical process and this thesis relies on a definition proposed by Richard Downie who argued learning is “a process by which an organization uses new knowledge or understanding gained from experience or study to adjust institutional norms, doctrine and procedures in ways designed to minimize previous gaps in performance and maximize future successes.”⁸¹ For NATO and coalitions like ISAF, learning could occur as the Alliance and coalition recognize the character of the conflict has changed or that operational activities are not achieving the desired operational effect and so could result in new or adapted plans and activities, and as such would be reflected in: revised strategies and campaign plans; organizational structures; resources; operational missions, operating procedures, and ways of fighting; doctrine; and education, training, and exercise programs.

Experience operating together in multinational missions can increase a coalition’s effectiveness since the member states’ military forces are more likely to become interoperable over time. This is because they establish common operational procedures, they overcome language barriers, and they develop a measure of trust in each other. In addition, successful action by an organization (demonstrated capacity) can generate more impetus for its use in other situations. For example, NATO seemed to demonstrate in the 1990s it had the combat power and expertise to deal with the conflicts in the Balkans, particularly the challenges associated with complex peace operations. This prior experience was a factor in the Alliance’s deliberations about whether and how to get involved in Afghanistan.

The two drivers identified above are linked. Political will is critical initially since this driver dictates operational action. Political will can be weak but it can be sustained by organizational capacity. Organizational capacity can either enhance or undermine political will and thus coalition cohesion depending on whether it facilitates or hinders change and

⁸¹ Richard Downie, *Learning from Conflict: The U.S. Military in Vietnam, El Salvador, and that Drug War* (Westport, CT: Praeger, 1998), 22.

adaptation. If the operational coalition can learn (recognize that the character of the conflict has changed or identify that its campaign plan is not achieving the objectives) and subsequently has the capacity to adapt in such areas as organizational structures, operating procedures, or military missions it is more likely to sustain political will and thus cohesion in the face of potentially destructive fraying forces. ISAF's case represents a bottom-up situation. The multinational operational adaptations helped sustain strategic-level political will and commitment at both the national and NATO levels. As such, ISAF's capacity to adapt generated and sustained cohesion which ensured the coalition did not fracture under the pressure of the multiple fraying forces.

Methodology and Research Sources.

This thesis employs a case study methodology to analyze a recent historical event. While it uses an inductive approach to explain incremental changes at the ISAF operational level and the endurance of cohesion in Afghanistan, the proposed analytical framework may be generalizable to other security organizations engaged in coalition warfare. This thesis also takes an evolutionary approach in its analysis of NATO's ISAF and coalition warfare in Afghanistan. Taking into consideration the passage of time is important because individuals, states, and organizations "not only accumulate experience but also learn from it . . . and . . . such learning can bring about new ways of doing things."⁸² In effect, policies, actions, and structures evolve incrementally as the strategic context changes and learning occurs. The evolution is cyclical, not linear, because historical processes do not only move in one direction, in consonance with the flow of time. Historical processes are not irreversible and so this thesis does not have a teleological perspective – i.e., positive progress is not inevitable. While time moves forward, historical processes can move either forward or backward – either progress or regression can occur even as the security context evolves.⁸³

⁸² John Lewis Gaddis, "International Relations Theory and the End of the Cold War," in Lynn-Jones and Miller, eds., *The Cold War and After*, 334-335. This thesis uses the evolutionary approach as described by John Lewis Gaddis.

⁸³ The concepts related to linear and cyclical evolution are based on the arguments of John Lewis Gaddis. Ibid., 364.

Research for this case relies mostly on a variety of English language sources. To the extent possible, it incorporates information from primary resources: archival material and memoirs; articles and speeches by key individuals; oral histories and official papers; and NATO and other official military documents. It also draws on more than 60 interviews with individuals who served at various levels in NATO and in Afghanistan. However, the memories of individuals, even key leaders, can be faulty, therefore some triangulation with other sources, such as media and newspapers reports and a range of secondary sources, was necessary to piece together an accurate recounting of what happened. The official website of “NATO in Afghanistan,” as well as separate ISAF and NTM-A websites provided a wealth of information. The *NATO Review* journal was also used as a source since key political or military officials often published articles or granted interviews for it.

NATO’s involvement in Afghanistan and ISAF’s expanding operations developed incrementally over time. Furthermore, developments in NATO during the years before 2001 laid foundations that influenced NATO’s decisions after the September 11th terrorist attacks and ISAF’s adaptations. Chapter 2 will therefore briefly cover key developments in political will and organizational capacity in NATO during the Cold War and the decade after it. The subsequent three chapters will break down NATO’s involvement in Afghanistan into three time periods. They will also cover developments in the U.S.-led *Operation Enduring Freedom* (OEF). Chapter 3 will cover September 2001 to July 2003 when NATO was absent from Afghanistan, but OEF began and expanded operationally. Chapter 4 will cover August 2003 to September 2008 when the Alliance took over several on-going operational missions (ISAF and the PRTs) and expanded them. Chapter 5 will cover October 2008 to December 2014 when NATO established the ISAF Joint Command (IJC) and NTM-A, merged ISAF and OEF, accompanied the U.S. surge, began the transition of security responsibilities to Afghan security forces, and ended the ISAF mission. Each of these chapters will cover developments in coalition warfare as they summarize major developments in the ebb and flow of the war, and they will analyze the shifts in political will

and organizational capacity that generated and sustained coalition cohesion. Chapter 6, the conclusion, will summarize the findings and implications of the thesis.

Expected Contribution.

The thesis' original contribution to the body of academic knowledge is a new application of concepts related to organizational learning and military adaptation. As noted above, the current literature focuses overwhelmingly at the national level on military innovation and adaptation in the defense establishments (ground, naval, and air forces) of individual nations, both in peacetime and war. This thesis widens the analysis from the national to the multinational. It also analyzes multinational military adaptation and change at the operational level, the ISAF coalition, which operated in the midst of a complex conflict that changed in character over time.

The thesis makes two additional contributions. Namely, it “tells the story” of NATO and ISAF in Afghanistan from start to finish, 2001-2014. Specifically, it recounts the key strategic changes at the NATO level that were relevant to Afghanistan and the operational developments and adaptations within the multinational ISAF coalition as the conflict changed. It is necessary to recount in some detail what happened in order to explain the paradox of enduring cohesion, even as the Alliance and coalition expanded their activities, which derived from the interplay of political will and organizational capacity. As such, this thesis provides much more granularity than previous scholarship, most of which concentrates on the individual nations which participated in Afghanistan, as it recounts operational developments within the multinational coalition. Finally, it begins to fill the gap in the alliance scholarship noted by Mark Webber earlier, namely it proposes an explanation for alliance development and long term change.

The activity of multinational alliances and coalitions is an area needing more scholarly research. With the end of the Cold War, the international security environment has become more complex with states having to deal with non-state and transnational actors as well as state challengers. Consequently, security organizations have not disappeared. Instead there are more of them, such as the military dimensions of the European Union (EU) and the

African Union (AU), and their range of operational missions has increased. Furthermore, their multilateral cooperation and collective actions have not been tied to preserving their members' survival in the international system. They are not primarily collective security or collective defense organizations. For example, today NATO is a hybrid organization. It retains its collective defense mission, but it has added a wide range of non-conventional, humanitarian, and state-building missions to its repertoire in order to perform security management missions. This phenomenon has spread to the EU and AU, both of which have focused only on security management missions (humanitarian, peace support, and stabilization operations), and both of which have on-going multinational missions whose mandates include security sector reform activities and supporting the development of democratic institutions, good governance, rule of law, and human rights in Bosnia, Kosovo, Sahel region, Somalia, and Ukraine.⁸⁴ Furthermore, these organizations have surprisingly been able to sustain operational cohesion in less threatening environments.

⁸⁴ EU missions: <http://eeas.europa.eu/csdp/>; and AU missions: <http://www.peaceau.org/en/>.

CHAPTER 2

SETTING THE STAGE

To explain NATO's involvement in coalition warfare in Afghanistan at the dawn of the 21st century, it is necessary to look back in time, particularly at the 1990s. Not only did NATO undergo incremental changes and adaptations in political will and organizational capacity after the September 11th, 2001 terrorist attacks, but it seems this has been NATO's character since its foundation.¹ More importantly, this thesis proposes that the changes it underwent in the 1990s, which led to NATO actually undertaking military action for the first time in its history, as well as shifts in the types of activities it was prepared to undertake, laid important foundations. In effect, the changes undergone in the 1990s ensured NATO was capable of acting in Afghanistan in the first place, as well as its subsequent ability to adapt.

While NATO is a military alliance, it is like no other alliance in history. It initially appeared somewhat similar to other military alliances since the North Atlantic Treaty codified a formal agreement for the allies to come to each other's aid in the event of an attack but it quickly evolved into something very different from the coalitions and alliances formed against such states as Revolutionary and Napoleonic France, Germany in the First and Second World Wars, and Saddam Hussein's Iraq in 1991. NATO adapted into a permanent, highly developed, formalized, and bureaucratic organization with enduring habits of political consultation and multiple connections among the members that became increasingly institutionalized over time as it responded to changes in the strategic environment. Furthermore, the Alliance has both a political and military purpose and vision.

Formally founded in April 1949, NATO was created in an era of institutional innovation. National leaders among the allied nations, particularly in the United States and

¹ In his analysis of NATO's first five years, Secretary General Lord Ismay stated, "The statesmen who negotiated the Treaty . . . did not attempt, at the outset, to draw up a blueprint of the international organization . . . or lay down any hard and fast rules of procedure. They realized that these could only be evolved step by step in the light of practical experience." He also emphasized, "Let it not be thought for a moment that the present arrangements are final: on the contrary they can, and will, be improved as time goes on and further experience is gained." Lord Ismay, *NATO: The First Five Years, 1949-1954*, "Introduction," <http://www.nato.int/archives/1st5years/chapters/intro.htm>.

United Kingdom, had faith in the ability of international institutions to facilitate international cooperation and support national prosperity and international peace and stability. They also believed that rebuilding international order required mutually supporting political, economic, and military lines of effort. Therefore, NATO was just one element in an international mosaic that included programs such as the European Recovery Program (also known as the Marshall Plan) and the creation of the United Nations, the Bretton Woods economic institutions, and the European Community (EC).

However, the NATO of the early days of the Cold War looked nothing like NATO at the end of the Cold War. Similarly, the NATO of 1989 was substantially different from the NATO that became involved in Afghanistan. This chapter will briefly summarize the initial developments in NATO, to highlight its evolving character during the first few decades of its existence. It will then document in more depth the incremental changes and adaptations in political will and organizational capacity during the 1990s that resulted in new activities and an expanded operational focus.

The Genesis of NATO.

After Adolf Hitler's Third Reich was defeated and the war ended in Europe in May 1945, there was no allied plan for a continuing military alliance. As a consequence, the United States ended the Lend-Lease program² and the allies executed rapid troop draw-downs and demobilizations. Within a year of Germany's surrender, American armed forces deployed on the Continent decreased from 3,100,000 to 391,000, British forces decreased from 1,321,000 to 488,000, and Canadian forces decreased from 299,000 to zero.³

However, a number of negative political, economic, and military developments between 1945 and 1948 brought Europe to "the brink of collapse."⁴ They included the need

² William I. Hitchcock, *The Struggle for Europe: The Turbulent History of a Divided Continent, 1945-2002* (New York: Doubleday, 2003), 48.

³ Ismay, *NATO*, Chapter 1, "Origins of the North Atlantic Treaty," <http://www.nato.int/archives/1st5years/chapters/1.htm>.

⁴ Lawrence S. Kaplan, *NATO and the United States: The Enduring Alliance* (New York: Twayne Publishers, 1994), 4.

to deal with tens of millions of refugees and displaced persons,⁵ which was exacerbated by severe food shortages, and a dollar crisis that undermined the effort to rebuild nations devastated by war. Soviet subversion of politics in occupied Eastern Europe⁶ was followed by what the West perceived as aggressive Soviet behavior: the Prague *coup d'état*, Communist influence in the Italian elections, pressure on Norway to conclude a non-aggression pact,⁷ and the Berlin blockade. This significant shift in the strategic environment led to the creation of the Marshall Plan, the provision of new U.S. grants and loans, and negotiations among the Western allies to create a new security pact. West European leaders not only felt militarily, socially, and politically threatened by the Soviet Union, they feared for the very survival of their nations given their ongoing economic difficulties and so they concluded the only way to stop Soviet expansion and ensure their nations' political stability was an alliance that guaranteed U.S. assistance.⁸

After months of negotiation complicated by U.S. Senate concerns about constitutional obstacles to automatic military commitments, the North Atlantic Treaty was signed in Washington, D.C. on April 4th, 1949.⁹ The initial members were ten European countries,¹⁰ Canada, and the United States. The Treaty was more than a military pact. It established a community of nations that shared “principles of democracy, individual liberty and the rule of law” and it identified a broad aspiration to safeguard the community’s “freedom, common heritage and civilisation.” To do this, the various articles of the Treaty articulated military, economic, political, and social objectives.¹¹

⁵ Hitchcock, *The Struggle for Europe*, 16-18.

⁶ Tony Judt, *Postwar: A History of Europe Since 1945* (New York: Penguin Books, 2005), 86, 87, 123, 130-133.

⁷ Kaplan, *NATO and the United States*, 19-20.

⁸ Hitchcock, *The Struggle for Europe*, 63, 88-91. Ryan Hendrickson argues the UK made the first move to create a permanent transatlantic security alliance and he references a classified 1944 British study that suggested a collective security organization comprised of the UK, U.S. and European allies was in the British long-term interest after the war. Ryan C. Hendrickson, *Diplomacy and War at NATO: The Secretary General and Military Action after the Cold War* (Columbia, MO: University of Missouri Press, 2006), 8-9.

⁹ Kaplan, *NATO and the United States*, 26-29.

¹⁰ They were: Belgium, Denmark, France, Iceland, Italy, Luxembourg, Norway, the Netherlands, Portugal and the UK. Greece, Turkey and West Germany joined in the 1950s, Spain in 1982.

¹¹ Article 3 states the members “separately and jointly, by means of continuous and effective self-help and mutual aid, will maintain and develop their individual and collective capacity to resist armed

Despite its unique character and vision, there was initially little structural substance to the Alliance (its organizational capacity was limited). Article 9 called for the establishment of a Council with representatives from every member nation which should meet “promptly at any time” to consider matters related to the Treaty,¹² but it did not specify that the Council had to be a permanently standing body and so its initial operating principle was periodic meetings in various locations. Article 9 gave the Council the authority to set up subsidiary bodies as needed, but it also specifically mentioned the requirement for the creation of a defense committee.¹³ The wording of the Treaty thus instituted flexibility and the potential for a permanently operating organization.

The first formal meeting of what came to be known as the North Atlantic Council (NAC) occurred in Washington, D.C. on September 17th, 1949. At the meeting, the Council agreed that it would normally be composed of foreign ministers, one of which would sit as Chairman, and they would meet annually in ordinary session and at other times as necessary. The Council also established the Defense Committee, composed of national defense ministers, which would meet in ordinary session annually or as needed. It also recommended the Defense Committee consider the establishment of a Military Committee (composed of chiefs of staff), a subordinate Standing Group which would operate on a continuing basis in Washington, D.C., and five Regional Planning Groups.¹⁴ The Defense Committee subsequently established all of the recommended military bodies.¹⁵

The overwhelming threat posed by the Soviet Union shaped the development of NATO’s strategic culture as a defensive alliance and meant the allies initially focused on the

attack.” Article 5 essentially states that an armed attack against any member would be considered an attack on all members and as such they would assist the attacked member and take “such action as [they] deem necessary, including the use of armed force.” Article 2 commits the members to “the further development of peaceful and friendly international relations by strengthening their free institutions.” It also calls for promoting stability and well-being by seeking “to eliminate conflict in their international economic policies,” and encouraging “economic collaboration” among the members. NATO, *NATO Handbook* (Brussels: NATO Office of Information and Press, 2001), 527-528.

¹² *Ibid.*, 529.

¹³ *Ibid.*

¹⁴ U.S. Department of State, “North Atlantic Council Communiqué,” September 17, 1949, <http://www.nato.int/history/doc/7-nac/communique.pdf>.

¹⁵ North Atlantic Council, “First Session, Approved Summary Minutes,” September 17, 1949, <http://www.nato.int/history/doc/7-nac/summary-minutes.pdf>.

Treaty's military purpose.¹⁶ The Council approved NATO's first strategic concept, Forward Defense, in strategy document DC (Defense Committee) 6/1, at its third session in January 1950. The Regional Planning Groups subsequently developed detailed defensive plans that were consolidated by the Standing Group into the "North Atlantic Treaty Organization Medium Term Plan," in the spring of 1950.¹⁷ While the Plan's goals were ambitious - to have an extensive array of air, ground, and naval forces ready to deter and, if necessary, to defeat a Soviet attack as far east as possible by 1954¹⁸ - the implementation of the plan was slow and uncoordinated. Member nations did not meet their force goals and they did not discuss essential logistical factors, such as how the forces would be supplied, paid for, or equipped.¹⁹

The slow pace of NATO meetings and planning changed when the strategic environment abruptly shifted in 1950: after announcing the establishment of the communist German Democratic Republic, the Soviet Union tested an atomic weapon; Mao Tse-tung established the communist People's Republic of China; and then North Korea invaded the South.²⁰ As a consequence, the United States decided to significantly increase military aid to help the allies build up their military forces, and to deploy additional U.S. ground forces and thousands of nuclear weapons onto West European soil.²¹ The events led to the promulgation of a new strategy and strategic concept – Forward Defense and Massive Retaliation.²² They also led to a shift in political will as the allies agreed to make major political and military organizational changes. These changes meant the Alliance acquired

¹⁶ NATO Research Section, *Monograph on "The evolution of NATO political consultation 1949-1962,"* (May 2, 1963), <http://www.nato.int/archives/docu/d630502e.htm>.

¹⁷ Gregory W. Pedlow, ed., *NATO Strategy Documents, 1949-1969* (Brussels: SHAPE Historical Office, 1997), 8-9.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 9. According to Pedlow, the estimated force requirements included 2,324 warships, 3,264 naval aircraft, 90 divisions, and 8,004 combat aircraft. According to Secretary General Lord Ismay, by May 1950, the Alliance had "about 14 divisions on the Continent and less than 1,000 aircraft." Ismay, *NATO*, Chapter 3, "The first steps," <http://www.nato.int/archives/1st5years/chapters/3.htm>.

¹⁹ Kaplan, *NATO and the United States*, 40-42.

²⁰ Hitchcock, *The Struggle for Europe*, 149.

²¹ Kaplan, *NATO and the United States*, 42-48, 56-60.

²² According to Pedlow, the concept of massive retaliation was first articulated in MC 48, which was approved by the NAC in December 1954. It was later updated in MC 14/2, which was approved by the Council in May 1957; Pedlow, *NATO Strategy Documents*, 17-20.

permanent consultation, decision, planning, and command capabilities and arguably gave it the capacity to engage in both conventional and nuclear warfare.

The military changes were implemented first. The NAC approved the creation of a permanent, integrated military command structure in September 1950. It included two major military commands and two special planning and coordination agencies subordinate to the Military Committee. The two new strategic military commands were: Allied Command Europe (ACE), commanded by the Supreme Allied Commander Europe (SACEUR), and Allied Command Atlantic (ACLANT), commanded by the Supreme Allied Commander Atlantic (SACLANT). The SACEUR was supported by a new headquarters, the Supreme Headquarters Allied Powers Europe (SHAPE) located near Paris in April 1951, and he had four subordinate commands, each with permanently operating headquarters: Allied Forces Northern Europe, Central Europe, Southern Europe, and the Mediterranean. The SACLANT's headquarters was located in Norfolk, Virginia in 1952. Four of the five original Regional Planning Groups were abolished since their work was undertaken by the new military commands; this left only the Canada-U.S. Regional Planning Group. A second special agency was also created, the Channel Committee, which was responsible for all planning related to the English Channel and adjoining coastal waters.²³

Member nations designated the national forces they “assigned” to the various NATO military commands in any given year. During peacetime these forces remained under national authority.²⁴ In the event of war, they would shift to Alliance control and NATO defense plans identified the missions these national forces would perform, but the allies did not envisage integrating the forces into multinational combat formations. Instead, the forward defense plans were based on a so-called “layer-cake” strategy in which “national

²³ Pedlow, *NATO Strategy Documents*, 15; and Kaplan, *NATO and the United States*, 44-47. General Dwight D. Eisenhower was appointed the first SACEUR by the NAC at its sixth session in Brussels in December 1950 and his command was activated in April 1951. The NAC appointed Admiral Lynde D. McCormick (U.S.) to be the first SACLANT in January 1952; his command became operational in April 1952.

²⁴ Lord Ismay identified three categories of member nation military forces: forces assigned to NATO; forces earmarked for NATO; and forces remaining under national command during war; Ismay, *NATO*, Chapter 7, “The Military Structure,” <http://www.nato.int/archives/1st5years/chapters/7.htm>.

corps [would] line up on the inner-German border” and operate more or less independently.²⁵

The NAC approved the political changes at its conference in Lisbon in February 1952. The allies created the Secretary General position and an International Staff to support it. They also decided to have the Council operate in “permanent session” through their permanent representatives.²⁶ The Secretary General reported directly to the NAC. He was responsible for setting the Council agenda, organizing its work, chairing the meetings of the permanent representatives, and supervising the work of the International Staff. The first Secretary General, Lord Hastings Ismay, and his staff were located in Paris along with the permanent representatives.²⁷ With these political and military changes, NATO became a permanently operating organization with consultation, decision, and planning bodies that facilitated more rapid decision-making and coordinated military action. The allies signaled the importance they gave to NATO’s purpose when Heads of State and Government began chairing NAC meetings in 1957.²⁸

A second period of major organizational and strategy changes occurred in 1966 when French President Charles de Gaulle took France out of the integrated military command structure and ordered the removal of all NATO military forces from French territory. Within the next year, SHAPE moved from Rocquencourt, France to Mons, Belgium. The Allied Forces Central Europe headquarters moved from Fontainebleau, France to Brunssum, Netherlands, and all U.S. military installations, to include European Command (EUCOM) and its subordinate army and air force units, moved out of France to other bases, primarily in West Germany.²⁹

²⁵ Eliot A. Cohen, “Political and Economic Alternatives for the Future of the Atlantic Alliance,” in James R. Golden, Daniel J. Kaufman, Asa A. Clark IV, and David H. Petraeus, eds., *NATO at Forty: Change, Continuity and Prospects* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1989), 253. This was also the author’s personal experience when assigned to a unit in the U.S. VII Corps in Germany in the late 1980s.

²⁶ Pedlow, *NATO Strategy Documents*, 15.

²⁷ Kaplan, *NATO and the United States*, 41, 48.

²⁸ “A short history of NATO,” <http://www.nato.int/history/index.html>. After 1957, NAC meetings were held at both Head of State/Government and Ministerial levels.

²⁹ Kaplan, *NATO and the United States*, 97-98. According to Kaplan: the French government opposed the principle of an integrated military command structure because it infringed on French sovereignty and French political control over French armed forces; it disliked the U.S. prominence in the

Even though President de Gaulle did not order the removal of the Alliance's political structure, under U.S. pressure, the office of the Secretary General and his International Staff were moved to a new NATO headquarters in Brussels, Belgium in 1967. The Defense Planning Committee (DPC), which had been established in 1963 to oversee NATO force planning, was reorganized and placed under the Secretary General in Brussels.³⁰ The DPC became the forum for all decisions related to military affairs and defense planning and thus it became "the NAC when it was meeting without France on defence issues."³¹ In addition, the old Standing Group was replaced by an International Military Staff and both it and the Military Committee moved from Washington, D.C. to the new NATO headquarters.³² With these changes, the key political and military bodies were closely co-located geographically in Belgium, facilitating planning and coordination.

With the change in France's position in the Alliance, the DPC was able to instruct the Military Committee to move forward with reviewing and revising the strategic concept. The DPC approved a new strategic concept, Forward Defense and Flexible Response, in December 1967. This strategic concept, with its supporting planning document, "Measures to Implement the Strategic Concept for the Defence of the NATO Area," remained in effect until after the end of the Cold War.³³

There were a number of other organizational changes in the 1960s and 1970s, such as the creation of a small multinational operational force called the ACE Mobile Force (AMF) in 1960. This was a rapid reaction force that integrated air and land forces and which could deploy to any threatened area of Allied Command Europe.³⁴ The Alliance established the Standing Naval Force Atlantic (STANAVFORLANT) in 1967.³⁵ Consultation and

Alliance; and it opposed a common nuclear policy. The nuclear issue had two facets: the French government insisted on dual-key control arrangements for any NATO nuclear weapons deployed on French soil (which the U.S. refused); and it also wanted an independent nuclear capability (called the *force de frappe*). Ibid., 85-87.

³⁰ Ibid., 97-100.

³¹ Pedlow, *NATO Strategy Documents*, 24.

³² Kaplan, *NATO and the United States*, 97.

³³ Pedlow, *NATO Strategy Documents*, 24-25.

³⁴ NATO, *NATO Handbook* (Brussels: NATO Office of Information and Press, 1995), 176.

³⁵ *The NATO Handbook Chronology: A Companion Volume to the 50th Anniversary Edition of the NATO Handbook* (Brussels: NATO Office of Information and Press, 1999), 14.

coordination of nuclear issues was institutionalized in the Nuclear Defense Affairs Committee (NDAC) and the Nuclear Planning Group in 1966.³⁶ In response to an expansion of Soviet naval activity in the Mediterranean, the allies created the Maritime Air Force Mediterranean command in Naples. They also incorporated the Mediterranean Command, which had been located in Malta, into Allied Forces Southern Europe in Naples and re-designated the command as Allied Forces South (AFSOUTH).³⁷

The Alliance also established a wide variety of new programs, procedures, and processes to improve its capacity to plan for and conduct operations. It created an institutionalized mechanism for identifying and tracking force contributions when it began Annual Program Reviews in 1952.³⁸ It utilized the strategic concept, the published strategies, the Annual Program Review, formal defense planning documents, and relevant financial and economic committees to set national goals for types and numbers of military forces that would be made available to the Alliance, to set targets for national defense budgets, and to encourage national acquisition of compatible equipment. The creation of the Military Agency for Standardization in January 1951 gave the allies the ability to standardize equipment, logistics, and operational and administrative practices.³⁹ When agreements were reached they were documented in Standardization Agreements (STANAGs). This agency was essential for improving the interoperability of the various national militaries. Interoperability was also developed through education and multinational training exercises. The NATO Defense College, established in 1951, focused on expanding the knowledge of senior officials, occupying key posts in the Alliance or national administrations, in areas related to allied politico-military concepts and issues. It was

³⁶ Kaplan, *NATO and the United States*, 95; and *The NATO Handbook Chronology*, 14.

³⁷ Kaplan, *NATO and the United States*, 105.

³⁸ Lord Ismay stated, "The primary purpose of an Annual Program Review is to produce goals for the build-up of military forces which are within the political and economic capabilities of the member governments and which are accepted as national commitment." The APR was in effect "the main instrument for co-ordinating the defence effort of the Alliance." It involved an unprecedented degree of national transparency and it involved a process by which members provided detailed information on national military programs, budgets, production schedules, and economic positions. The information was subsequently shared within the Alliance. Ismay, *NATO*, Chapter 8, "The Annual Review," <http://www.nato.int/archives/1st5years/chapters/8.htm>.

³⁹ Ismay, *NATO*, Chapter 7, "The Military Structure."

originally located in Paris, but moved to Rome in 1966.⁴⁰ The NATO (SHAPE) School was established in 1953 in Oberammergau, Germany. It trained civilian and military personnel serving in the Alliance. It had an operational orientation and initially offered two courses on conventional and nuclear weapons. Its charter was updated in 1975, and since then it has offered over 100 different courses on “current and developing NATO operations, strategy, policy, doctrine and procedures.”⁴¹ The first combined training maneuvers were held in the fall of 1951.⁴² The exercise program expanded rapidly and in 1953 there were approximately 100 training exercises held throughout the NATO area. They ranged from command post exercises at SHAPE headquarters to multinational maneuvers by air, land, and sea forces.⁴³ This robust spectrum of training exercises continued over the succeeding decades.

All of the organizational changes were oriented on strengthening the Alliance’s deterrence and defensive capabilities, but at the same time, the Alliance expanded its strategic approach. When the Flexible Response strategic concept was adopted in 1967, the NAC also adopted the recommendation of the Harmel Report “which called for the encouragement of *détente*” with the Soviet Union. This was mainly due to a divergence in member threat perceptions as tensions relaxed and relations normalized between Western and Eastern Europe/USSR.⁴⁴ NATO accommodated this divergence by balancing defense with *détente*. Over the course of the 1970s and 1980s, the Alliance endeavored to normalize relations with the Warsaw Pact countries via political dialogue focused on confidence building measures as well as arms control, disarmament, and balanced force reductions.⁴⁵

⁴⁰ Ibid; and NATO, *NATO Handbook* (Brussels: Public Diplomacy Division, 2006), 307-308.

⁴¹ NATO, *NATO Handbook* (1995 edition), 182-183; and “NATO School Oberammergau (NSO),” <http://natoschool.nato.int>.

⁴² Ismay, *NATO*, Chapter 5, “Counting the cost,” <http://www.nato.int/archives/1st5years/chapters/htm>

⁴³ Ismay, *NATO*, Chapter 9, “The increase in strength,” <http://www.nato.int/archives/1st5years/chapters/9.htm>.

⁴⁴ A.W. Deporte noted the changes in threat perceptions during NATO’s first forty years. He noted the generally shared high level of fear in the 1940s-1950s and then the relatively limited reduction and divergence in threat perceptions in the late 1960s through the 1980s; A.W. Deporte, “The First Forty Years,” in Stanley R. Sloan, ed., *NATO in the 1990s* (Washington, DC: Pergamon-Brassey’s International Defense Publishers, Inc., 1989), 55-59.

⁴⁵ Kaplan, *NATO and the United States*, 105-109, 122. The Warsaw Pact was a military alliance created in May 1955 when the Soviet Union, Albania, Bulgaria, Czechoslovakia, East Germany,

Overall, the Alliance seemed to demonstrate it was a learning organization. It proceeded deliberately in creating relevant political and military structures as the strategic environment changed and it was flexible enough to reform or disband subsidiary bodies when it needed to do so. NATO's character was constant evolution – via new organizational bodies and new strategies – as it sought to create a credible and interoperable military capability. The efforts were not always successful and members did not always fulfill their commitments. However, the transparency involved in processes like the Annual Program Review allowed the organization and its members to identify “deficiencies in equipment, units below the required standard, bottlenecks in production and other weaknesses” so that remedies could be sought.⁴⁶ The ability to adapt meant the organization retained its value for its members which influenced their national will to maintain their political and military commitments. This commitment was tested by periodic domestic political opposition,⁴⁷ and periodic crises but the deft diplomatic skills of successive Secretaries General⁴⁸ helped the organization to weather difficult periods such as the Suez Canal crisis, the French withdrawal from the integrated military command structure, the Greek-Turkish conflicts over Cyprus, and disagreements over burden-sharing and nuclear policy. Shared interests and the consultation, decision, and planning bodies assisted the Alliance in sustaining cohesion during the Cold War.

The Alliance's one consistent attribute during the Cold War was its strategic culture which identified a clear adversary and against which it was prepared to conduct defensive conventional and nuclear operations. Thanks to enduring member commitment and a credible deterrent threat, NATO was never called to use military force during its first four decades. This changed after 1989. Fortunately, the long-standing habits of consultation and

Hungary, Poland, and Romania signed the Warsaw Treaty. Its impetus was West Germany's membership in NATO. Albania withdrew from the treaty in 1968; Douglas L. Clark, “The Military Institutions of the Warsaw Pact,” *Report on Eastern Europe*, Vol. 1, No. 49 (December 7, 1990): 28-29.

⁴⁶ Ismay, *NATO*, Chapter 8, “The Annual Review.”

⁴⁷ Lawrence S. Kaplan, *NATO Divided, NATO United: The Evolution of an Alliance* (Westport, CT: Praeger, 2004), 27, 45, 61-62, 85, 88, 103. Deporte, “The First Forty Years,” in Sloan, ed., *NATO in the 1990s*, 55-57, 64, 69.

⁴⁸ Hendrickson, *Diplomacy and War at NATO*, 16-37.

cooperation, the solid organizational capacities reflected in the military command structures and the planning bodies, and the cultural familiarity developed through education, training, and exercise programs, gave the Alliance the ability to survive and adapt in the post-Cold War environment. Its responses to the challenges of the 1990s also laid the foundations for its involvement in Afghanistan.

New Strategic Security Environment.

To the surprise of political and military leaders, policy experts, and scholars, the Cold War ended in an unexpectedly peaceful way. Furthermore, between 1988 and 1991, a cascading series of events completely changed the landscape of Europe. The initial impetus for what developed into sweeping strategic changes was economic crisis in the Soviet Union and Warsaw Pact countries. President Mikhail Gorbachev's actions to revitalize the Soviet Union⁴⁹ had unintended consequences which spiraled out of his control, particularly when he made it clear Moscow would not intervene in Eastern Europe; he effectively overturned the Brezhnev doctrine.⁵⁰

NATO leaders recognized Gorbachev was a different kind of Soviet leader and that his domestic and foreign policy initiatives created an unprecedented strategic opportunity. For example, he withdrew military forces from Afghanistan, took a dramatic step in arms control negotiations by signing the Intermediate-range Nuclear Forces (INF) treaty in December 1987, and unilaterally reduced the size of the Soviet armed forces by half a million men. His cuts in defense expenditures were part of a broader effort to overhaul the Soviet Union's moribund economy.⁵¹ But even as late as the spring of 1989, when the communist world in Europe was on the cusp of dramatic change, NATO leaders were

⁴⁹ Ferdinand J.M. Feldbrugge, "Gorbachev's reforms," *NATO Review*, Vol. 36, No. 6 (December 1988): 16-21; and Ronald Linden, "The Dynamics of Change in Eastern Europe," *Report on Eastern Europe*, Vol. 1, No. 1 (January 5, 1990): 1-3.

⁵⁰ Gorbachev announced in a speech to the UN General Assembly on December 7, 1988 that "Freedom of choice is a universal principle. There should be no exceptions." This was widely understood to mean that Moscow would no longer use force against the Soviet satellite states to impose its version of socialism, as it had done previously. Gorbachev reiterated the policy in July 1989 in a speech to the Council of Europe and he told President Bush directly in December 1989 that he would not use force to retain Communist regimes in Eastern Europe; Judt, *Postwar*, 604, 632.

⁵¹ Douglas L. Clarke, "Soviet Troop Withdrawals from Eastern Europe," *Report on Eastern Europe*, Vol. 1, No. 13 (March 30, 1990): 43.

hedging their bets, calculating that Gorbachev's reforms would be limited, that the USSR would retain substantial conventional and nuclear capabilities, and that therefore the bipolar nuclear stand-off would continue.⁵² They could not conceive that Gorbachev's initiatives would lead to political changes throughout Central, Eastern, and Southeastern Europe which would subsequently overturn the security environment.

They miscalculated. Europe's political landscape transformed in 1989 as Poland, Hungary, East Germany, Bulgaria, Czechoslovakia, and Romania successively adopted political pluralism either as a result of democratic elections, the collapse of the communist regime, or an outright *coup d'état*. The result was a wholesale rejection of communism and the movement toward market economies.⁵³ These events were accompanied by extensive migration to the West when Hungary opened its borders in September. The opening of the East German border and the Berlin Wall followed in November – at which point the Iron Curtain effectively dissolved.⁵⁴ The longstanding goal of German reunification was then achieved in under a year, on October 3, 1990.⁵⁵ The Soviet Union itself began to disintegrate in March 1990 when Lithuania declared its independence. The other Baltic countries followed with their own independence declarations in 1991. That year, almost every other Soviet republic declared its sovereignty from Moscow. At the end of 1991, the Soviet Union itself dissolved when Gorbachev stepped down (having survived a *coup* attempt the previous August).⁵⁶ These events were paralleled by a security development: the Warsaw Pact military alliance disintegrated in 1991. Its military structures were dissolved in March and its political structure was officially disbanded in July.⁵⁷

⁵² Ambassador Henning Wegener, NATO's Assistant Secretary General for Political Affairs, "The management of change: NATO's anniversary summit," *NATO Review*, Vol. 37, No. 3 (June 1989): 2-6.

⁵³ Judt, *Postwar*, 605-627.

⁵⁴ Hundreds of thousands of Eastern Europeans rushed west as the Iron Curtain disintegrated. Ronald Linden, "Introduction," *Report on Eastern Europe* (December 1, 1989): 1-2; also Barbara Donovan, "East Germany in 1989," and Alfred Reisch, "Hungary in 1989: A Country in Transition," in *Report on Eastern Europe*, Vol. 1, No. 1 (January 5, 1990): 15, 16, 22.

⁵⁵ Zelikow and Rice, *Germany Unified and Europe Transformed*, viii, 366, 367.

⁵⁶ Judt, *Postwar*, 646-657.

⁵⁷ Kjell Engelbrekt, "Redefining National Security in the New Political Environment," *Report on Eastern Europe*, Vol. 2, No. 30 (July 26, 1991): 4.

By 1992, the guiding impetus for the existence of NATO had disappeared. Although the Alliance was not a player in the momentous political events between 1989 and 1991, it had not remained static. It constantly evaluated the security implications of the changing landscape. These included fears of the rise of nationalism and the re-emergence of conflict in the transitioning and newly independent countries due to ethnic grievances or border disagreements. There were fears of either political instability or internal crisis within the USSR or the USSR's revitalization.⁵⁸ There were also concerns over nuclear weapon proliferation within the area of the Soviet Union.⁵⁹ As a consequence, the Alliance held five summit conferences between May 1988 and November 1991 as it grappled with its purpose and role going forward. Its strategic culture began to change as it incrementally changed its strategy and force posture, undertook new actions, and created new institutions.

The May 1988 Brussels Summit recognized Gorbachev's policy changes, but it maintained the status quo because of the "steady growth of Soviet military capabilities." The allies reaffirmed the strategy of deterrence and defense, as well as the *détente* and arms control policies.⁶⁰ The May 1989 Summit in Brussels once again reaffirmed the military strategy, but the allies advanced arms control efforts by proposing significant reductions in conventional forces via the Conventional Forces in Europe (CFE) Treaty. Additionally, the allies expressed their intent to expand the Alliance's political dimension in order to help shape the political developments in the East, to establish more cooperative relations between West and East, and "to shape a new political order of peace in Europe."⁶¹ This coincided

⁵⁸ Sir Michael Alexander, UK Permanent Representative to NATO, "NATO's role in a changing world," *NATO Review*, Vol. 38, No. 2 (April 1990): 1-2; and NATO Secretary General Manfred Wörner, "The Atlantic Alliance in the new era," *NATO Review*, Vol. 39, No. 1 (February 1991): 5-7. The security concerns were shared by the transitioning countries in Central Europe; Vladimir V. Kusin, "Security Concerns in Central Europe," *Report on Eastern Europe*, Vol. 2, No. 10 (March 1991): 25-26, 29, 34; and Alfred A. Reisch, "Foreign-policy Reorientation a Success," *Report on Eastern Europe*, Vol. 2, No. 51/52 (December 20, 1991): 15-16, 18.

⁵⁹ NATO Secretary General Manfred Wörner, "NATO transformed: the significance of the Rome Summit," *NATO Review*, Vol. 39, No. 6 (December 1991): 5.

⁶⁰ NATO, "Declaration of the Heads of State and Government Participating in the Meeting of the North Atlantic Council in Brussels (2nd-3rd March 1988)," *NATO Review*, Vol. 36, No. 2 (April 1988): 30-31.

⁶¹ NATO, "Declaration of the Heads of State and Government Participating in the Meeting of the North Atlantic Council in Brussels, 29th-30th May 1989," *NATO Review*, Vol. 37, No. 3 (June 1989): 28-30.

with President George H.W. Bush's speech that month on NATO's "new mission" to achieve the vision of a Europe "whole and free."⁶² However, the underlying context of both Summit Declarations was the continuing Cold War and a perception of "us versus them." NATO's strategic culture endured as an alliance balanced against the Warsaw Pact. This context changed by the end of the year.

President Bush and President Gorbachev announced the end of the Cold War after their summit in Malta, on December 3, 1989. It was their first face-to-face meeting, they stated they had no intention of fighting each other, and they agreed to undertake big reductions in military forces.⁶³ The subsequent *communiqué* issued by the Secretary General after the December 4th NAC meeting announced that Europe was on the threshold of a new era. It no longer referred to two opposing alliances, but rather stated that NATO would seize the opportunity to facilitate and promote democratic reform in the East and thus fulfill the vision of an undivided Europe. While it again affirmed the deterrence and defense strategy, it justified the strategy as a "guarantor for peace" in an environment of "change and uncertainty."⁶⁴

The NATO Summit in London in July 1990 marked a major shift in the Alliance's military strategy, force posture, and military structure. Because East and West were no longer adversaries, the allies agreed to move away from Forward Defense, where appropriate, and modify Flexible Response in order to reflect a reduced reliance on nuclear weapons. The allies also agreed to reduce the readiness levels of active forces and scale back training and exercises. They decided to restructure the active forces, to field smaller, more mobile, but also multinational forces that could be moved to crisis regions within NATO territory.⁶⁵ These decisions moved the multinational integration of the military

⁶² President George H.W. Bush, "A Europe Whole and Free: Remarks to the Citizens of Mainz, Federal Republic of Germany," May 31, 1989, <http://usa.usembassy.de/etexts/ga6-890531.htm>.

⁶³ "1989: Malta summit ends Cold War," *BBC*, December 3, 1989, http://news.bbc.co.uk/onthisday/hi/dates/stories/December/3/newsid_4119000/4119950.stm.

⁶⁴ Secretary General Manfred Wörner, "Final Communiqué," 14-15 December, 1989, http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natolive/official_texts_23540.htm.

⁶⁵ NATO, "London Declaration on a Transformed North Atlantic Alliance," *NATO Review*, Vol. 38, No. 4 (August 1990): 33. A number of multinational formations were created in the 1990s: German-

structure from major headquarters down into operational units far beyond what the AMF had done and they replaced the Cold War static, linear defense plans. These changes laid the foundations for an organizational capacity (deployable, multinational units) that would prove useful in the Balkans and Afghanistan.

The decision to build more mobile and versatile forces reflected the new security concerns: instability from political transition, or ethnic and territorial disputes. At the time, they were not intended to deploy out-of-area because some member nations still insisted that NATO forces should be used only within NATO territory. The out-of-area issue had been a longstanding one.⁶⁶ In the 1950s, Council representatives agreed the Alliance faced a global threat and there were no geographic limits to the political and security issues on which the NAC could consult, but there was a difference between consultation and responsibility.⁶⁷ The United States was initially adamant that NATO's military forces were to be used only on Treaty territory. France shared the U.S. view and was scrupulous in its interpretation of the Treaty and military responsibilities.⁶⁸ In addition, in the early days of the Alliance, several European allies were engaged in military operations outside their national borders and they were "loath to get involved in" each other's wars. Some national positions changed over time and by 1990 both the American and British governments were calling for an out-of-area role for the Alliance. France, however, remained adamant that NATO had no out-of-area role.⁶⁹

The debate had a real-world impact in August 1990 when Iraqi President Saddam Hussein invaded Kuwait. The United States led the creation of an ad hoc multinational

Dutch Corps, Multinational Division Centre, Eurofor, Euromarfor, and Eurocorps; Anthony King, *The Transformation of Europe's Armed Forces: From the Rhine to Afghanistan* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 40-42.

⁶⁶ Douglas Stuart and William Tow argued that out-of-area debates have been an enduring element in NATO's history and they identified 31 major out-of-area disputes that spilled over into the NATO forum between 1949 and 1989; in Douglas Stuart and William Tow, *The Limits of Alliance: NATO Out-of-Area Problems Since 1949* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1990), 3, 8-18.

⁶⁷ NATO Research Section, *Monograph on "The evolution of NATO political consultation 1949-1962."*

⁶⁸ Robert E. Hunter, "NATO's Future: The Out-of-Area Problem," in Sloan, ed., *NATO in the 1990s*, 316.

⁶⁹ Jan Willem Honig, *NATO: An Institution Under Threat?* (New York: Institute for East-West Security Studies, 1991), 9, 11, 34-35.

coalition, under UN mandate, because NATO was not allowed to operate outside member territory, “essentially due to French objections.”⁷⁰ However, the Alliance played a supporting role. It sent AWACS aircraft to Turkey to monitor the border region (*Operation Anchor Guard*).⁷¹ Council representatives gave their political support to the U.S.-led coalition and warned Iraq not to violate Turkey’s territorial integrity. The allies logistically supported the deployment and transit of U.S. and European forces. They deployed the air component of the AMF and air defense assets, including Patriot batteries, to Turkey (*Operation Ace Guard*). Additionally, twelve members contributed ground, air, and naval forces to the coalition.⁷² In effect, NATO took a very small step toward conducting conventional military operations out-of-area.

The next NATO summit in Rome in November 1991 continued the Alliance’s organizational adaptation and the allies unveiled a new strategic concept: Dialogue, Cooperation, and Defense. The concept built on the 1990 London Declaration, integrated the political and military elements of Alliance policy, and took a broad approach to security promotion in the new European landscape.⁷³ It was used by defense planners to transform the Alliance’s force posture and military structure which acknowledged the deep cuts in national defense budgets and the steep reductions in standing forces that were ongoing, such as the U.S. decision to reduce its forces in Europe from 250,000 to 100,000.⁷⁴ NATO leaders also announced their intention to cut sub-strategic nuclear weapons by about eighty percent.⁷⁵

The allies created a virtue out of necessity. In a security environment where military challenges could range from conventional conflict with a resurgent Russia, to the spillover

⁷⁰ Charles G. Cogan, *Oldest Allies, Guarded Friends: The United States and France Since 1940* (Westport, CT: Praeger, 1994), 182.

⁷¹ Allied Command Operations, “NATO’s Operations, 1949-Present,” <http://www.aco.nato.int/resources/21/NATO%20Operations,%201949-Present.pdf>.

⁷² William H. Taft, U.S. Permanent Representative on the North Atlantic Council, “European security: lessons learned from the Gulf war,” *NATO Review*, Vol. 39, No. 3 (June 1991): 7-8, 10.

⁷³ NATO, “Rome Declaration on Peace and Cooperation,” <http://www.nato.int/docu/comm/49-95/c911108a.htm>.

⁷⁴ Wörner, “NATO transformed: the significance of the Rome Summit,” 7; and Kaplan, *NATO Divided, NATO United*, 114.

⁷⁵ NATO, “Rome Declaration on Peace and Cooperation.”

of smaller scale civil conflicts, terrorism, WMD proliferation, and humanitarian crises, NATO adopted a multi-directional force posture that emphasized mobility and flexibility from a smaller pool of multinational military forces which maintained various levels of readiness. The forces would be trained and prepared to conduct a variety of missions, some of which were new, ranging from collective defense, to crisis management, peacekeeping, and humanitarian assistance.⁷⁶ The military command structure was also adapted. The Channel Command was abolished and the size of the major (ACE and ACLANT) and subordinate command headquarters were reduced and streamlined.⁷⁷ The allies were not just oriented on reductions. In April 1992, NATO replaced its Naval On-Call Force for the Mediterranean with the Standing Naval Force Mediterranean (STANAVFORMED) as a response to instabilities in the Alliance's southern region.⁷⁸ These posture, force structure, and mission changes ultimately laid the foundations for wide-ranging military operations in the subsequent decades.

As noted previously, NATO has always been more than a military security pact. It has a political and social vision, as well as military and non-military objectives. However, the non-military side of NATO was relatively invisible during the Cold War. This non-military side became much more visible after 1989. In effect, the end of the Cold War, the transformation of the European political landscape, and the new security challenges provided an opening for the Alliance. Member nations maintained their overall goal of preserving stability and peace on the continent, but the Alliance changed what it did to achieve this goal in response to the changed security environment. In particular, NATO's political dimension expanded as it endeavored to achieve an ambitious political and social vision of a Europe whole and free. Ultimately, NATO actions followed two broad tracks in the 1990s in response to two distinct security challenges: the post-communist transition and

⁷⁶ General John R. Galvin, Supreme Allied Commander Europe, "From immediate defence towards long-term stability," *NATO Review*, Vol. 39, No. 6 (December 1991): 14-17.

⁷⁷ General Vigleik Eide, Chairman of NATO's Military Committee, "The military dimension in the transformed Alliance," *NATO Review*, Vol. 40, No. 4 (August 1992): 23.

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, 22; and *The NATO Handbook Chronology*, 45.

war in the Balkans. Both of the tracks were oriented on achieving security and fulfilling the vision. Both tracks also converged.

NATO's Response to Transitioning Post-Communist Countries.

NATO's relationship with the transitioning post-communist countries evolved over time and to an extent it was a result of pressure from the East. The leaders of the democratizing countries instituted foreign policies in 1990 that emphasized a "return to Europe." They pressed hard for joining Western institutions, and all of them indicated they wanted positive relationships with NATO.⁷⁹ The Alliance already had working relationships with them as a consequence of its longstanding *détente* policy. In addition, cooperative relations with the members of the Warsaw Pact had been developed in the course of the CFE Treaty negotiations. These relationships incrementally expanded as NATO overtly undertook political efforts that supported its security goals. It was clear the post-communist countries wanted to institute democratic reforms, but they faced extensive challenges since this involved deep social, cultural, economic, and political change which was complicated by potential ethnic and territorial tensions. The Alliance could play a role in this reform effort and as such it undertook a mission to "project stability" outside the territory of NATO members.

NATO's first formal step occurred at the London Summit in July 1990 when Alliance leaders extended invitations for the USSR and Eastern European nations to establish diplomatic ties and liaison offices at NATO; they were quickly established that year.⁸⁰ Over the next few years a wide range of activities developed. They included reciprocal visits of senior military officials. NATO, SHAPE and the major military command headquarters were opened to visits by Central and Eastern European, as well as

⁷⁹ Vladimir V. Kusin, "The Road to Europe," *Report on Eastern Europe*, Vol. 1, No. 43 (October 26, 1990): 32-34; and Ronald Linden, "The New Eastern Europe and East-West Relations," *Report on Eastern Europe*, Vol. 1, No. 46 (November 16, 1990): 26-28.

⁸⁰ Ambassador Henning Wegener, Assistant Secretary General for Political Affairs, "The transformed Alliance," *NATO Review*, Vol. 38, No. 4 (August 1990): 3.

Russian, leaders.⁸¹ This was an unprecedented level of transparency for the Alliance. Other contacts included conferences, political and defense reform consultations, and staff talks. Military officers from the transitioning countries were invited to attend the NATO Defense College in Rome and the NATO School in Oberammergau in 1991. The offers were accepted and by October that year some 80 officers (in ranks from major to brigadier-general) attended special NATO familiarization courses.⁸² The participation continued in subsequent years and in 1996 the non-NATO partner nations were invited to attend the Defense College's regular five-month courses.⁸³

Over time, NATO's relations with the post-communist countries encompassed a range of activities that focused on increasing political stability, creating new structures to ensure East-West cooperation, and encouraging and assisting defense reform, civilian control of the military, and arms control. In general, the extensive range of contacts facilitated mutual understanding and reduced historic suspicions. They also gradually moved the transitioning countries towards interoperability with NATO military forces.

The deepening relations were accompanied by pressure from the democratizing countries for NATO membership. In 1991, instability in the Soviet Union and conflict in Yugoslavia raised concerns in Central and Eastern Europe about "the possibility of a refugee wave from the unraveling Soviet Union" or a spillover of violence from the disintegrating Yugoslavia.⁸⁴ However, the allies were not ready for the political repercussions of enlarging the Alliance towards the east, and moreover, the defense establishments of the aspirant countries' were incompatible with NATO.

Instead, the Alliance moved towards a structure that institutionalized regular consultations with the democratizing countries. In October 1991, U.S. Secretary of State James Baker and German Foreign Minister Hans-Dietrich Genscher proposed the creation

⁸¹ Lt. Col. Angus Watt, "The hand of friendship – the military contacts programme," *NATO Review*, Vol. 40, No. 1 (February 1992): 19-20.

⁸² *Ibid.*, 20-21; and Wörner, "NATO transformed," 4-5.

⁸³ Lt. General Richard J. Evraire, Commandant, NATO Defense College, "The NATO Defense College and Partnership for Peace," *NATO Review*, Vol. 44 No. 2 (March 1996): 34.

⁸⁴ Kusin, "Security Concerns in Central Europe," 26.

of a North Atlantic Cooperation Council (NACC) as a forum for East and West to discuss and cooperate on political and military issues.⁸⁵ The forum was established at the Rome Summit in November 1991.⁸⁶ Initially conceived as a mechanism to help “project stability” in the democratizing countries, within a few years it focused even further out-of-area, beyond the borders of NACC members. The body eventually produced a concrete security action since it initiated the first steps towards preparing both NATO members and partners to participate in new and unprecedented missions: peace support operations.⁸⁷

At the inaugural meeting of the NACC in December 1991, during which nine Central and Eastern European countries joined the body, Alliance ministers “emphasized the NACC was not an end in itself but indeed another step in a continuing process to make NATO’s relationship with Central and Eastern Europe into an important element of a more peaceful and cooperative European security order.” Within two weeks of the first NACC meeting, the Soviet Union dissolved. Alliance leaders agreed that membership should be extended to the newly sovereign states once they were internationally recognized and they indicated “their acceptance of the values of the new Europe.”⁸⁸ By June 1992, twelve more countries joined the body.⁸⁹

Besides regular consultation and formal summit meetings, cooperative activities between Alliance members and the partners were documented in annual Work Plans. Cooperation ranged from defense planning and the conversion of defense industries, to arms control and civil-military relations. Consultations initially focused on residual Cold War issues such as the withdrawal of Russian troops from Eastern Europe. However, in 1992, as

⁸⁵ Jan B. de Weydenthal, “The Cracow Summit,” *Report on Eastern Europe*, Vol. 2, No. 43 (October 25, 1991): 28.

⁸⁶ Robert Weaver, “NACC’s five years of strengthening cooperation,” *NATO Review*, Vol. 45, No. 3 (May-June 1997): 24.

⁸⁷ Peace support operation is a collective term that includes various types of operations aimed at achieving, enforcing, and maintaining peace. NATO official documents and official statements can confuse the issue, because they often refer to “peacekeeping operations” when they are really talking about the range of peace support operations.

⁸⁸ Ambassador G. von Moltke, Assistant Secretary General of NATO’s Political Affairs Division, “NATO takes up its new agenda,” *NATO Review*, Vol. 40, No. 1 (February 1992): 6-7.

⁸⁹ Weaver, “NACC’s five years of strengthening cooperation,” 24. The initial nine members were Bulgaria, Czechoslovakia, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Romania, and the Soviet Union. In March 1992, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Moldova, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, Ukraine and Uzbekistan joined. In June 1992, Albania and Georgia joined.

conflict in Yugoslavia spread to Bosnia-Herzegovina, the NACC discussed peacekeeping. In December 1992, the NACC agreed members would share peacekeeping experiences and possibly train together.⁹⁰ In June 1993, NACC members agreed to actually engage in peacekeeping operations together, under UN or CSCE (Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe) auspices, and they developed processes to facilitate operational cooperation (sharing of doctrine, planning activities, identification of national contributions, and training).⁹¹ The NACC however, was not the right structure to facilitate the military integration required for NATO and partner nations to operate together.

The introduction of the Partnership for Peace (PfP) program met this need. Adopted at the NATO Summit in Brussels in January 1994,⁹² it complemented the continuing operation of the NACC and all of the partner nations were invited to join it (it was also open to other countries). Besides providing a mechanism for developing convergent and cooperative military capabilities, it was purposefully focused on strengthening the ability of all nations to undertake multinational operations – in particular, peacekeeping, humanitarian, and search and rescue operations.⁹³

Participation in PfP included specific requirements of partner nations: they had to honor basic principles of democracy and human rights, and settle disputes peacefully; they had to have transparent defense planning and budget processes and civilian control of the military; they had to develop military forces able to operate with NATO and to participate in peacekeeping and humanitarian operations; and they had to actively involve themselves in joint planning, training, and exercises with NATO.⁹⁴ To facilitate day-to-day coordination,

⁹⁰ Ibid., 24-25.

⁹¹ John Kriendler, Deputy Assistant Secretary General for Political Affairs, "NATO's changing role – opportunities and constraints for peacekeeping," *NATO Review*, Vol. 41, No. 3 (June 1993): 20-21.

⁹² Les Aspin, Former US Secretary of Defense, "New Europe, new NATO," *NATO Review*, Vol. 42, No. 1 (February 1994): 12.

⁹³ Manfred Wörner, "Shaping the Alliance for the future," *NATO Review*, Vol. 42, No. 1 (February 1994): 5-6. Field Marshal Sir Richard Vincent, "The Brussels Summit – a military perspective," *NATO Review*, Vol. 42, No. 1 (February 1994): 9.

⁹⁴ "Partnership for Peace: Framework Document," *NATO Review*, Vol. 42, No. 1 (February 1994): 29. General George A. Joulwan, SACEUR, "NATO's military contribution to Partnership for Peace: The progress and the challenge," *NATO Review*, Vol. 43, No. 2 (March 1995): 3-4. PfP requirements further institutionalized some processes the democratizing countries had already undertaken such as appointing civilian defense ministers and adopting defensive doctrines as they began depoliticizing,

the partner nations established permanent offices at both NATO headquarters and SHAPE. A tangible benefit of the program was the extension of Article 4 rights to the partners. They gained the right of formal consultation in the event they felt directly threatened. The program was also a concrete way to ensure partners were producers as well as consumers of security. The program was so popular that 30 nations had joined it by 2006.⁹⁵

PfP's exercise program expanded rapidly. From three exercises in 1994,⁹⁶ the allies and partners held 80 exercises in 1996.⁹⁷ The interoperability garnered from training together also contributed to the development of common peacekeeping doctrine, to standardizing administrative and operational procedures, and aiding common defense matériel procurement.⁹⁸ The program was producing convergent organizational capacity. In fact, the level of military integration was such that partner nations were prepared to contribute military forces to NATO's first peace support operations in its history. Partner nations deployed forces to Bosnia-Herzegovina and participated in both the 60,000-man Implementation Force (IFOR) in December 1995 and the 31,000-man Stabilization Force (SFOR) that took over from IFOR in December 1996.⁹⁹

The cooperative partnerships the Alliance established with the transitioning post-communist countries continued to evolve as partner capacities matured. In May 1997, NATO Foreign Ministers agreed to enhance the PfP program by giving the partners a larger role in decision-making related to the execution of operational missions in which they planned to contribute, and giving them a larger role in the oversight of on-going NATO missions in which they participated. They also revised the program's Planning and Review Process (PARP) to make it mirror NATO's force planning process and expanded the range

downsizing, and transforming their Soviet-model armies to institutions that could respond to emerging security challenges and that were subordinate to national political authority.

⁹⁵ NATO, *NATO Handbook* (2006 edition), 196.

⁹⁶ Joulwan, "NATO's military contribution to Partnership for Peace," 3-5.

⁹⁷ Nick Williams, "Partnership for Peace: Permanent Fixture or Declining Asset?" in Philip H. Gordon, ed., *NATO's Transformation: The Changing Shape of the Atlantic Alliance* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 1997), 228.

⁹⁸ Robin Beard, Assistant Secretary General for Defense Support, "Defence procurement cooperation with Central and Eastern Europe," *NATO Review*, Vol. 42, No. 4 (August 1994): 23-24.

⁹⁹ North Atlantic Treaty Organization, "Peace support operations in Bosnia and Herzegovina," http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natolive/topics_52122.htm.

of potential military missions.¹⁰⁰ The Foreign Ministers also launched the Euro-Atlantic Partnership Council (EAPC) which replaced the NACC.¹⁰¹ Open to all Euro-Atlantic countries,¹⁰² it became an overarching political consultation and cooperation body that deepened the NATO-partner relationship by opening consultation to a wider range of security issues. It also gave partner nations more decision-making power. By the late 1990s, the EAPC became the forum in which partners and allies developed the operational plan for the continuing SFOR mission and a common approach for the Kosovo crisis.¹⁰³

The new bodies and programs created by NATO in the 1990s were a way for NATO to influence defense reform in the transitioning countries in a direction that served the interests of the allies. The Alliance's insistence on transparency, civilian control of the military, respect for human rights, democratic principles, collective security, and international law ensured the countries complied with arms control agreements and contributed to democratic consolidation. The development of common doctrine and operational procedures in exercises, and partner nation participation in the NATO educational colleges, ensured the partner nation militaries became interoperable with the allies' and thus were prepared to participate in the operations that were needed in the new security environment. Having partner nations participate in operations in the Balkans was also a way for the Alliance to spread the operational burden, particularly since partners "lived in the neighborhood" and had as strong an interest in maintaining or re-establishing peace as the allies. The bodies also firmly established habits of continuous NATO-partner consultation, planning, and decision-making, and the habit of operating outside NATO member territory, all of which were expansions in strategic culture.

¹⁰⁰ Ambassador Sergio Balanzino, Deputy Secretary General of NATO, "Deepening partnership: The key to long-term stability in Europe," *NATO Review*, Vol. 45, No. 4 (July-August 1997): 10-15.

¹⁰¹ Sergio Balanzino, Deputy Secretary General of NATO "A year after Sintra: Achieving cooperative security through the EAPC and PfP," *NATO Review*, Vol. 46, No. 3 (Autumn 1998): 4.

¹⁰² In this way, the neutral countries such as Austria, Finland, and Sweden who were members of PfP could be full members of both enhanced PfP and the EAPC. Both bodies were open to any Euro-Atlantic country that wanted a relationship with NATO; Robert Weaver, "Building security through partnership," *NATO Review*, Vol. 49 (Autumn 2001): 8.

¹⁰³ Balanzino, "A year after Sintra," 6-7.

The Alliance eventually decided to admit new members (a shift in political will). Between 1999 and 2009, 12 of the post-communist countries joined NATO.¹⁰⁴ Their participation in PfP, the NACC, and the EAPC meant when they joined they were immediately ready to participate in multinational operations, if they had not already done so. However, the road to the use of military force in both the Balkans and Afghanistan, as well as the Alliance's engagement in entirely new forms of warfare, was not an easy one.

NATO's Response to War in the Balkans.

The Alliance concerns about political instability, nationalism, ethnic and territorial disputes, and refugee flows were legitimate and they were manifested in the conflicts in Yugoslavia as it disintegrated. While war in Yugoslavia provided an impetus for the Alliance to eventually undertake new military missions, it was not the initial driver for significant changes in NATO's strategic culture. The Alliance had adopted a broader vision of its roles and functions, adjusted its strategy of Forward Defense and Flexible Response, and changed its force posture a year before Slovenia and Croatia declared their independence and war erupted. Furthermore, the expanded range of possible military missions identified at the Rome Summit applied to allied territory only because national views diverged on the out-of-area question. However, allied thinking on the out-of-area issue changed substantially over the next year.

War in Yugoslavia developed and spread in stages, beginning with the Slovenian and Croatian declarations of independence on June 25th, 1991. The conflict in Slovenia was over almost before it started. After only ten days, the Yugoslav government accepted peace mediations by the EC and a ceasefire began on July 7th.¹⁰⁵ Croatia was different. Fighting between Croatian and federal military forces (the JNA) erupted as the JNA withdrew from Slovenia in July. Fighting was bitter and by the time a UN brokered ceasefire was announced in December 1991, Serb irregular forces and the JNA had occupied a third of Croatian territory. As the United Nations Protection Force (UNPROFOR) began deploying

¹⁰⁴ The Czech Republic, Hungary, and Poland joined in 1999; Bulgaria, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Romania, Slovakia, and Slovenia joined in 2004; and Albania and Croatia joined in 2009.

¹⁰⁵ Oto Luthar, ed., *The Land Between: A History of Slovenia* (Frankfurt: Peter Lang, 2008), 508-513.

into Croatia to monitor the ceasefire in March 1992,¹⁰⁶ war broke out in Bosnia-Herzegovina following its declaration of independence on March 6th.¹⁰⁷

NATO was not initially engaged in Yugoslavia because the member nations did not ask it to get involved. Alliance leaders did not see NATO as the solution for all the problems in the new European security landscape and this was reflected in their support for the creation of conflict prevention/crisis management mechanisms in the UN and CSCE, and their support for the development of a European security and defense capability.¹⁰⁸ Furthermore, the EC stepped forward to help negotiate an end to the conflicts. European confidence was reflected in Luxembourg Foreign Minister Jacques Poos' statement, "The hour of Europe has dawned."¹⁰⁹ He added, "If one problem can be solved by the Europeans it is the Yugoslav problem. This is a European country and it is not up to the Americans. It is not up to anyone else."¹¹⁰ The United States supported Europe's role. It was not interested in getting involved in Yugoslavia, as demonstrated in Secretary of State James Baker's famous quote, "We don't have a dog in this fight."¹¹¹

While the UN remained the lead entity for resolving the conflict in Bosnia and various mediation efforts were attempted over the years, they were fruitless and violence escalated. Western media reporting of extensive ethnic cleansing and death camps increased the pressure for the international community to act.¹¹² Since neither the UN nor the CSCE had the military capabilities required to deal with the conflict (and neither did the EC/EU), NATO very slowly became involved in 1992 as they turned to it.¹¹³ The allies also slowly

¹⁰⁶ Laura Silber and Allan Little, *Yugoslavia: Death of a Nation* (New York: Penguin Books, 1997), 169-174, 190-204.

¹⁰⁷ Noel Malcolm, *Bosnia: A Short History* (New York: New York University Press, 1996), 230-235.

¹⁰⁸ Moltke, "NATO takes up its new agenda," 3-6; and Wörner, "The Atlantic Alliance in the new era," 8.

¹⁰⁹ Silber and Little, *Yugoslavia*, 159.

¹¹⁰ Quoted in Jeffrey Gedmin's testimony before the U.S. Senate, "North Atlantic Relations Talk with the Senate Foreign Relations Committee," March 24, 1999, <http://www.aei.org/speech/foreign-and-defense-policy/regional/europe/north-atlantic-relations-talk-with-the-senate-foreign-relations-committee/>.

¹¹¹ Kaplan, *NATO Divided, NATO United*, 117.

¹¹² Silber and Little, *Yugoslavia*, 244-252, 258, 276, 303, 319, 335, 364.

¹¹³ Colonel S. Nelson Drew, "Post-Cold War American Leadership in NATO," in Kenneth W. Thompson, ed., *NATO and the Changing World Order* (Lanham, MD: University of America, 1996), 8-9.

reached consensus on acting out-of-area. Discussions on peacekeeping occurred in parallel in both the NAC and the NACC.

In June 1992, members agreed at the Oslo Ministerial that the Alliance would support via resources or expertise, on a case-by-case basis, CSCE peacekeeping operations. The December Ministerial extended an offer of support to UN peacekeeping operations. NATO's military authorities were subsequently directed to undertake planning and preparation for a range of peace operations. Both the CSCE and the UN accepted the offers and that year NATO launched three missions. *Operation Maritime Monitor* (July-November 1992) employed warships to monitor compliance with the UN arms embargo in the Adriatic. It was complemented by a similar Western European Union (WEU) maritime monitoring mission. *Operation Sky Monitor* (October 1992-April 1993) employed AWACS aircraft to monitor the UN no-fly zone over Bosnia. *Operation Maritime Guard* (November 1992-June 1993) actually enforced the arms embargo (it was also complemented by a WEU mission). Over the seven months of the mission, NATO warships challenged 12,000 ships, inspected 176 of them, and detected nine violators.¹¹⁴

NATO's military activity expanded in 1993. In April, the NAC agreed to actually enforce the no-fly zone over Bosnia, and it began *Operation Deny Flight* (April 1993-December 1995). For this mission over 100 AWACS, fighter, and reconnaissance aircraft operated over Bosnian airspace. In June, the NATO and WEU maritime enforcement missions were combined into a single operation: *Operation Sharp Guard* (June 1993-October 1996). Additionally, after a June Ministerial meeting, the allies offered air power support to UNPROFOR's mission to protect safe areas. It offered airstrikes and close air support, if needed, to UN peacekeepers.¹¹⁵ The UNPROFOR mission had expanded to Bosnia in September 1992 and the UN added the mission to protect safe areas in the spring

¹¹⁴ Kriendler, "NATO's changing role," 17-20; and "Statement on 15 July by the Secretary General on monitoring by NATO forces of compliance with the UN embargo on Serbia and Montenegro," *NATO Review*, Vol. 40, No. 4 (August 1992): 8; and Allied Command Operations, "NATO's Operations, 1949-Present."

¹¹⁵ Kriendler, "NATO's changing role," 16, 19; and Allied Command Operations, "NATO's Operations, 1949-Present."

of 1993. Srebrenica was declared a protected safe area in April and five other areas were declared safe areas in June – Sarajevo, Žepa, Tuzla, Goražde, and Bihać.¹¹⁶

The UN accepted NATO's airpower offer and this, as well as the continuing *Operation Deny Flight*, ultimately led to NATO's first conventional combat operations in its history. On February 28, 1994, two NATO F-16 aircraft shot down four Bosnian Serb fighter-bombers that were violating the no-fly zone near Banja Luka. Over the rest of the year, NATO engaged in a number of limited air strikes (called pin pricks by some) against a variety of targets.¹¹⁷

The next year, after repeated Bosnian Serb violations of safe areas, the massacre at Srebrenica, and a mortar attack on a marketplace in Sarajevo, the allies undertook a major air campaign with two linked phases. *Operation Deadeye* (August 30-31, 1995) attacked the Bosnian Serb integrated air defense system in Bosnia. After an inconclusive bombing halt, *Operation Deliberate Force* (September 5-14, 1995) targeted Bosnian Serb command and control facilities, air defenses, artillery units, logistics and ammunition depots, and bridges. In total, over the two and a half weeks, allies flew some 3,400 sorties, with 750 attack missions.¹¹⁸ This NATO show of strength converged with a shift in Serbian President Slobodan Milošević's war aims as well as Croatian military successes that changed the dynamics of the conflict. They enabled the successful conclusion of a peace agreement after years of effort.¹¹⁹

After the warring parties signed the Dayton Peace Accord in Paris in December 1995, the UNPROFOR mission ended and NATO deployed ground forces out-of-area for the first time in its history. *Operation Joint Endeavour* (December 1995-December 1996) was also NATO's first peace support operation. Planning for the operation had begun in

¹¹⁶ Silber and Little, *Yugoslavia*, 261; and Lawrence Freedman, "Bosnia: does peace support make any sense?" *NATO Review*, Vol. 43, No. 6 (November 1995): 21.

¹¹⁷ NATO, *NATO Handbook: 50th Anniversary Edition* (Brussels: Office of Information and Press, 1999), 116-117.

¹¹⁸ Silber and Little, *Yugoslavia*, 366; and Allied Command Operations, "NATO's Operations, 1949-Present."

¹¹⁹ Silber and Little, *Yugoslavia*, 343, 345, 353-356, 366-367.

1993¹²⁰ which meant the 60,000-man Implementation Force (IFOR) could deploy immediately in December. It operated under a one-year UN mandate. All of the allies (16 nations) and 18 non-NATO partners contributed forces. Since NATO did not have a standing deployable headquarters to activate for the IFOR mission, the designated commander worked with SHAPE to establish an ad hoc headquarters before forces deployed.¹²¹ Subordinate operational forces were distributed into three multinational task forces based in three different areas (Tuzla, Mostar, and Banja Luka).¹²² Thus, NATO's first operational employment of land forces was in a purely multinational formation.

IFOR's mission was technically very specific: separate the warring parties and create a secure environment to facilitate the political, economic, and reconstruction activities of civilian agencies. However, IFOR activities expanded beyond the purely military tasks outlined in the peace agreement and they included: election support; emergency humanitarian assistance; reconstruction of schools, hospitals, airports, roads, bridges, and rail-lines; de-mining and mine-awareness education; and transportation, logistical, and other support to the UN and other international organizations in the country.¹²³

As IFOR's end date approached, allied and partner foreign and defense ministers decided to extend the military presence in Bosnia because civil and political progress had been limited. They agreed the security provided by multinational military forces was necessary to provide the peace and stability required for progress on the civil side.¹²⁴ In effect, the military, civil, and political "pillars" of the Dayton Agreement were mutually supporting and interdependent. IFOR was therefore followed by the Stabilization Force

¹²⁰ Kriendler, "NATO's changing role," 16.

¹²¹ Admiral Leighton Smith, Commander, Implementation Force, "The pillars of peace in Bosnia," *NATO Review*, Vol. 44, No. 4 (July 1996): 12-13.

¹²² NATO, "Peace support operations in Bosnia and Herzegovina," http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natolive/topics_52122.htm; and NATO, *NATO Handbook* (1999 edition), 121-122. The non-NATO troops were from Albania, Austria, Bulgaria, Czech Republic, Egypt, Estonia, Finland, Hungary, Jordan, Latvia, Lithuania, Malaysia, Morocco, Poland, Romania, Russia, Sweden, and Ukraine. Some of the UNPROFOR forces remained in country and were transferred to IFOR authority.

¹²³ "IFOR's Contribution to Rebuilding Bosnia," *NATO Review*, Vol. 44, No. 5 (September 1996): 23; and NATO, *NATO Handbook* (1999 edition), 123.

¹²⁴ Gregory L. Schulte, Director, Bosnia Task Force, NATO International Staff, "Bringing peace to Bosnia and change to the Alliance," *NATO Review*, Vol. 45, No. 2 (March 1997): 23.

(SFOR) which operated for eight years (as *Operation Joint Guard*, December 1996-June 1998, and *Operation Joint Forge*, June 1998-December 2004) before the Alliance turned the mission over to the EU.¹²⁵ While the numbers of troops deployed to support SFOR were substantially fewer than in IFOR (troop numbers started at 31,000 and gradually declined to 7,000 by 2004), the nations that contributed to IFOR also contributed to SFOR; furthermore, four additional nations provided troops: Argentina, Ireland, Slovakia, and Slovenia.¹²⁶

The mission of SFOR was to deter fresh hostilities and stabilize the peace. The tasks performed by the forces again extended into the non-military realm. They included: assisting the paramilitary police; supporting UN efforts to reform the civil police; confiscating unauthorized weapons and closing down unauthorized police checkpoints; responding to civil unrest; supporting UN efforts to provide a variety of news sources to local populations; supporting elections; and assisting refugees and displaced persons.¹²⁷ In addition, NATO initiated a number of activities to train and mentor the Bosnian armed forces. These included seminars and visits to strengthen the Bosnian central government's defense institution, the conduct of special courses at the NATO School for military and defense officials from Bosnia's three ethnic groups, and the opening of regular NATO School courses to Bosnian candidates.¹²⁸

To facilitate coordination among military, governmental, and non-governmental agencies, IFOR/SFOR created a Civil-Military Coordination (CIMIC) organization. Meetings chaired by the Deputy Commander brought together military commanders, and representatives of the local civilian populations and the myriad of international organizations operating in Bosnia. They were meant to develop cooperative working relationships, synchronize activities, and identify areas where IFOR/SFOR could provide

¹²⁵ Allied Command Operations, "NATO's Operations, 1949-Present."

¹²⁶ NATO, *NATO Handbook* (1999 edition), 125; and NATO, "Peace support operations in Bosnia and Herzegovina." As with the December 1995 military transfer of authority, some of the troops in IFOR remained in country and were transferred to SFOR authority.

¹²⁷ Greg Schulte, Director, Bosnia Task Force, NATO International Staff, "SFOR continued," *NATO Review*, Vol. 46, No. 2 (Summer 1998): 27-30.

¹²⁸ David Lightburn, NATO's International Staff Bosnia Task Force, "NATO Security Cooperation Activities with Bosnia and Herzegovina," *NATO Review*, Vol. 46, No. 2 (Summer 1998): 31-32, 34.

assistance.¹²⁹ Since the preponderance of the CIMIC capability came from the United States, SHAPE created a training program to meet the demand of non-U.S. allies interested in developing trained CIMIC personnel. Its first training courses were held in the fall of 1997.¹³⁰ With the addition of NATO's experience in KFOR later in the decade, SHAPE began drafting policy and doctrine on CIMIC to ensure a proper level of military involvement in civilian tasks and to articulate how CIMIC should operate in a military theatre.¹³¹ This was one area where NATO began to institutionalize, through policy, education, and doctrine, its new operational missions.

The resolution of the Bosnia conflict did not end war in the Balkans. The next conflict area was Serbia and its province of Kosovo. The roots of the conflict were deep and were tied to tensions between Muslim Kosovar Albanians and Orthodox Serbs. The JNA was deployed to Kosovo five times between 1945 and 1990 to quell civil disturbances before Yugoslavia disintegrated.¹³² By 1991, Serbian political appointees controlled the executive and administrative institutions in Kosovo and 6,000 Serbian police maintained a fragile calm.¹³³ The calm was punctuated with periodic violence by both sides during the early 1990s, but the situation changed substantially in 1996 when the Kosovo Liberation Army (KLA) began an armed insurrection. The insurgency targeted Serbian police, supposed Albanian collaborators, and Serbian civilians. KLA violence escalated in 1997 and 1998. In response, the Serbian army and police launched what were essentially scorched earth counter-insurgency operations in May and September. By late 1998, some 200,000 Kosovar Albanians were displaced within the province and 98,000 had fled the region.¹³⁴

¹²⁹ Smith, "The pillars of peace in Bosnia," 14-15.

¹³⁰ Colonel William R. Phillips, Chief, Civil-Military Cooperation SHAPE, "Civil-Military Cooperation: Vital to peace implementation in Bosnia," *NATO Review*, Vol. 46, No. 1 (Spring 1998): 24-25.

¹³¹ "CIMIC Reconstruction," *NATO Review*, Vol. 49 (Spring 2001): 21.

¹³² Milan Andrejevich, "The Yugoslav Army in Kosovo: Unrest Spreads to Macedonia," *Report on Eastern Europe*, Vol. 1, No. 8 (February 23, 1990): 38.

¹³³ Milan Andrejevich, Patrick Moore, and Duncan M. Perry, "Croatia and Slovenia Declare Their Independence," *Report on Eastern Europe*, Vol. 2, No. 28 (July 12, 1991): 27; and Milan Andrejevich, "Kosovo: A Precarious Balance between Stability and Civil War," *Report on Eastern Europe*, Vol. 2, No. 42 (October 18, 1991): 23, 26-28.

¹³⁴ Tim Judah, *Kosovo: War and Revenge* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2000), 102-103, 117-120, 128-145, 155-180.

International diplomatic efforts to stop the fighting in 1998 were unsuccessful. Neither the international monitors in the Kosovo Verification Mission nor NATO's aerial monitoring mission (*Operation Eagle Eye*) had the power to constrain the two sides. In particular, Serbia repeatedly violated temporary ceasefires when "training exercises" turned into full-fledged offensive operations. The final international efforts at a negotiated peace at Rambouillet and in Paris in February and March 1999 also failed.¹³⁵

The NATO air campaign (*Operation Allied Force*) to force Serbia to withdraw police and military forces from Kosovo began on March 24th and continued for 78 days until June 10, 1999. Preparation for the operation had begun long in advance. The NATO ministerial held in May 1998 tasked military authorities to begin planning for a range of contingencies, it announced a port visit by STANAVFORMED to Durres, and it announced a number of PfP activities (exercises and assistance programs) with Albania and Macedonia to signal its interest in resolving the crisis in Kosovo. The ministers also emphasized the Alliance's close consultations with Albania, Macedonia, Russia, Ukraine, and the EAPC, and it proposed that relevant international organizations (UN, OSCE, and WEU) coordinate their efforts to resolve the crisis.¹³⁶ At the June ministerial, the allies directed the military authorities to conduct air exercises in Albania and Macedonia to demonstrate NATO's ability to project power rapidly into the region and it expanded the range of possible military contingency missions.¹³⁷ These two ministerial meetings identified why NATO was concerned about Kosovo: allies feared the violence and instability could jeopardize the peace agreement in Bosnia; they worried the conflict could spill-over into, and destabilize, Albania and Macedonia; and they worried about humanitarian problems related to so many refugees and displaced persons.¹³⁸

¹³⁵ R. Craig Nation, *War in the Balkans* (Carlisle, PA: Strategic Studies Institute, 2003), 228-244.

¹³⁶ NATO, "Statement on Kosovo Issued at the Ministerial Meeting of the North Atlantic Council held in Luxembourg on 28 May 1998," *NATO Review*, Vol. 46, No. 3 (Autumn 1998): D5.

¹³⁷ NATO, "Statement on Kosovo Issued at the Ministerial Meeting of the North Atlantic Council in Defence Ministers Session, Brussels, 11 June 1998," *NATO Review*, Vol. 46, No. 3 (Autumn 1998): D12.

¹³⁸ NATO, "Statement on Kosovo Issued at the Ministerial Meeting of the North Atlantic Council held in Luxembourg on 28 May 1998," D5; and NATO, "Statement on Kosovo Issued at the

Extensive planning efforts over the previous year meant NATO military forces were ready to act rapidly when negotiations broke down in March 1999.¹³⁹ *Operation Allied Force* was the largest conventional operation on European soil since World War II. Some 912 aircraft and more than 35 ships (from which cruise missiles were launched) participated in the campaign. According to the SACEUR, “Allied pilots flew 37,465 sorties, of which 14,006 were strike missions.” The air operations had two objectives: to destroy and disrupt Serb police and military forces in Kosovo; and to destroy and disrupt the ability of the Serbian state to continue prosecuting its ethnic cleansing campaign. Targets included police and military units, command and control facilities, communications capabilities, artillery and air defenses, logistical facilities, the power grid, and key bridges in both Kosovo and Serbia proper.¹⁴⁰ The air campaign lasted longer than NATO had anticipated (allied leaders had wrongly expected Milošević to crumble rapidly) but it was ultimately successful in forcing Serbia to meet international demands.¹⁴¹

Recognizing there would be a need for a peace implementation force once hostilities ended, to help the return of refugees and support humanitarian assistance efforts, to begin rebuilding the shattered province, and to stabilize the province while a durable political solution was sought, NATO prepared for its second peace support operation, carried out by KFOR. The ACE Rapid Reaction Corps (ARRC) was tasked to serve as the headquarters element and it began arriving in Macedonia in February 1999. It shifted from its preparations to deploy into Kosovo in April as a humanitarian crisis developed in Macedonia, due to the massive influx of hundreds of thousands of refugees. The ARRC

Ministerial Meeting of the North Atlantic Council in Defence Ministers Session, Brussels, 11 June 1998,” D12.

¹³⁹ Nation, *War in the Balkans*, 236-237.

¹⁴⁰ General Wesley K. Clark, Supreme Allied Commander, Europe, “When force is necessary: NATO’s military response to the Kosovo crisis,” *NATO Review*, Vol. 47, No. 2 (Summer 1999): 15-18.

¹⁴¹ Some, like NATO spokesman Jamie Shea, have argued that NATO undermined its credibility and resolve at the start of the air campaign by ruling out the use of ground forces; it was not until NATO escalated the air campaign and began considering the use of ground forces in May that Milošević decided resistance was futile; Jamie Shea, “Instant history: Jamie Shea reflects on continued interest in NATO’s Kosovo campaign and reviews five books which have already appeared on the subject,” *NATO Review*, Vol. 49 (Summer 2001): 21.

built refugee camps, and delivered food, water, and other supplies until the UNHCR and other humanitarian agencies could take over relief operations.¹⁴²

Another NATO force in Albania fulfilled similar humanitarian functions. *Operation Allied Harbour* was NATO's first humanitarian assistance mission and it was approved by the NAC on April 15, 1999.¹⁴³ The mission was activated to help the Albanian government deal with the humanitarian crisis created by an influx of some 430,000 refugees.¹⁴⁴ The ACE Mobile Force (Land) deployed to Albania as the headquarters element of the Albania Force (AFOR).¹⁴⁵ Twenty-four NATO and non-NATO countries contributed forces to the AFOR, which totaled 8,080 troops.¹⁴⁶ Besides building refugee camps, the AFOR coordinated all civil and military air traffic in Albania, supported the onward movement of aid supplies into Kosovo, and assisted the UNHCR in evacuating refugees to other countries in Europe.¹⁴⁷

Upon the signing of the Military Technical Agreement on June 9th and Serbia's subsequent withdrawal of forces, hostilities ended and KFOR began deploying into Kosovo on June 12, 1999.¹⁴⁸ KFOR's mission was called *Operation Joint Guardian* (June 12, 1999-present) and it operated under a UN mandate.¹⁴⁹ At its height, the force included some 50,000 troops. All of the allies (19 member nations) contributed forces as well as 20 non-NATO partners.¹⁵⁰ Over time, the number of troops decreased as security conditions improved and by 2014 there were less than 5,000 troops. The structure of KFOR also changed several times. Initially, forces were distributed into four multinational task forces.

¹⁴² Ambassador Sergio Balanzino, Deputy Secretary General of NATO, "NATO's humanitarian support to the victims of the Kosovo crisis," *NATO Review*, Vol. 47, No. 2 (Summer 1999): 12-13; and Clark, "When force is necessary," 17-18.

¹⁴³ Balanzino, "NATO's humanitarian support to the victims of the Kosovo crisis," 12.

¹⁴⁴ NATO, *NATO Handbook* (2006 edition), 151.

¹⁴⁵ Clark, "When force is necessary," 17.

¹⁴⁶ HQ, Allied Joint Force Command Naples, "Operation Allied Harbour Extended Information Sheet," <http://www.jfcnaples.nato.int/page91012443.aspx>. The contributing nations to AFOR were Austria, Belgium, Canada, Czech Republic, Denmark, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Italy, Latvia, Lithuania, Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Switzerland, Turkey, United Arab Emirates, United Kingdom, and United States.

¹⁴⁷ Balanzino, "NATO's humanitarian support to the victims of the Kosovo crisis," 12-13.

¹⁴⁸ Clark, "When force is necessary," 18.

¹⁴⁹ Allied Command Operations, "NATO's Operations, 1949-Present."

¹⁵⁰ NATO, *NATO Handbook* (2001 edition), 128.

In 2006, forces were re-distributed into five multinational task forces, and in 2010 the forces were consolidated into two multinational battle groups.¹⁵¹ The headquarters elements rotated every six months.¹⁵² As with IFOR/SFOR, therefore, KFOR was a wholly multinational formation. In addition, the periodic rotation of the headquarters elements provided operational experience to the various NATO headquarters.

KFOR's mission was more complicated than the IFOR/SFOR mission because there was no functioning local government which could play a role in civil, political, and economic reconstruction. Instead, the NATO force coordinated with an interim "state" structure, the UN Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK).¹⁵³ KFOR actions were also wide-ranging. Its military tasks included securing the province to prevent new hostilities, disarming the KLA, and turning the KLA into a civil emergency force under UN control. It cleared mines from roads and buildings, conducted hundreds of daily patrols, and operated over 200 vehicle checkpoints. Its non-military tasks included assisting humanitarian organizations to distribute aid, build temporary shelters, and aid the return of refugees. It fulfilled policing duties until civilian agencies arrived on the ground. Other tasks included: rebuilding roads, bridges, the railway, and the Priština airport; building houses, and restoring basic communications, and electrical and water services; providing routine and emergency medical services; and supporting elections.¹⁵⁴ As IFOR/SFOR had done, KFOR established a CIMIC organization to coordinate military, civil, and economic activities with UNMIK and the other governmental and non-governmental organizations operating in the province.¹⁵⁵

In general, throughout the decade, NATO demonstrated it was a learning organization, although adaptation was often incremental and reluctant. It recognized it was in a new strategic environment and it grappled with the best way to respond. To address the

¹⁵¹ NATO, "NATO's role in Kosovo," http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natolive/topics_48818.htm.

¹⁵² General Klaus Reinhardt, "Commanding KFOR," *NATO Review*, Vol. 48 (Summer/Autumn 2000): 19.

¹⁵³ Christopher Bellamy, "Combining combat readiness and compassion," *NATO Review*, Vol. 49 (Summer 2001): 10.

¹⁵⁴ Reinhardt, "Commanding KFOR," 17-19.

¹⁵⁵ Balanzino, "NATO's humanitarian support to the victims of the Kosovo crisis," 13.

new threats and challenges it endeavored to improve its organizational capacities. Evidence of learning was reflected in the promulgation of new strategy, and the creation of new bodies (NACC, EAPC), and new programs (PfP) to support new relationships with the post-communist countries and other non-NATO partners. It published new doctrine (peace operations and CIMIC) and adapted education, training, and exercise programs. The Alliance continually adapted its military structure to try to ensure it could achieve its strategic objectives as member governments reduced the size of their armed forces. It not only employed force for the first time in its history, albeit very incrementally and only after it became evident the CSCE, EU, and UN were not capable of dealing with the conflicts in Bosnia and Kosovo, but also adopted new military missions as it slowly got to grips with the character of the emerging security challenges. With each mission and operational deployment the various NATO leaders gathered lessons learned and sought to improve what the Alliance did and how it performed.

Overall the changes and adaptations that NATO underwent in the 1990s were evidence of enduring convergent political will (and member commitment to NATO) and they laid foundations for the Alliance that would subsequently prove useful after the September 11, 2001 attacks when adaptation was pushed even further. The Alliance's shift in strategic culture meant members eventually reached consensus on operating out-of-area and agreed to execute a wide range of operational missions, both of which expanded even further after 2001. It developed some experience in deploying multinational military formations and it developed the habit of integrating non-NATO partners. Furthermore, NATO's experience in pursuing mutually supporting political, economic, and military lines of effort to achieve its security objectives in both the democratizing countries and the Balkans would prove relevant in Afghanistan.

CHAPTER 3

SEPTEMBER 2001-JULY 2003: NATO ABSENCE

As the 21st century dawned in 2001 and NATO settled in to conducting peace operations in the Balkans, no one would have predicted the Alliance would be leading a large, multinational coalition in a shattered country deep in the heart of Central Asia within a few years. Although the 1990s had seen a number of firsts for NATO – first use of military force in conventional combat operations, first out-of-area interventions, and the shift to the conduct of entirely new activities, including peace and humanitarian operations – the organization and its member nations were not prepared for the sudden change in the international security environment precipitated by the attack of a non-state actor against the most powerful state in the international system. Although transnational terrorism had been recognized as a security threat for decades, before September 2001 it was not a priority concern for either national policymakers or international security organizations. The attention of NATO was further limited by the fact that for Alliance members out-of-area meant focusing on geographic regions that were immediately adjacent to allied territory. In 2001, NATO was not a global security organization.

Lack of concern and attention did not mean lack of threat and so al Qaeda's coordinated attacks on the United States on September 11, 2001 took political and military leaders, defense experts, and scholars by surprise. It was also a prime manifestation of the dangers posed by the combination of transnational terrorist groups, failed states, and ungoverned spaces, for the ideologies, values, and interests of Afghanistan's Taliban government converged sufficiently with al Qaeda's to give this Islamic jihadist movement a base from which to launch terrorist attacks around the world. Former Finnish President Martti Ahtisaari characterized the challenge posed by the new security environment when he said in an interview in Autumn, 2001, "Many of today's most serious threats [such as terrorism, corruption, organized crime, drug trafficking, and collapsed states] are global in scale . . . Taken together, these new threats are such that it is extremely difficult for

governments to come up with effective responses. Clearly, these problems cannot be solved without effective international cooperation.”¹

However, international cooperation is often difficult to achieve. NATO’s initial response to the attacks was another first. Alliance members invoked Article 5 for the first time in history. Ironically, the members rallied to the aid of the United States, when for more than 50 years they had expected it would be the United States who would come to their aid. But while NATO’s activities in the Balkans had laid the groundwork for eventual operations in Afghanistan because of the adaptations in organizational capacity it had undertaken and the experience it gained in dealing with complex challenges that called for the execution of a wide range of military operations in conjunction with civil authorities, this did not lead automatically, or easily, to the organization’s involvement in Afghanistan after the initial statement of solidarity. As with the Balkans in the 1990s, NATO’s involvement in Afghanistan was incremental and occurred only after significant shifts in political will and strategic culture.

This chapter covers the period of time when NATO was absent from Afghanistan. It briefly summarizes the country’s recent history to provide a context for the symbiotic relationship between the Taliban government and al Qaeda. It then covers the international response to the September 11th attacks and key points in the ebb and flow of the conflict between September 2001 and July 2003, including developments in the U.S.-led OEF coalition and the implementation of the ISAF mission. While NATO was initially not engaged in Afghanistan, it gradually became involved, starting with its provision of assistance to the 1 (German/Netherlands) Corps as it prepared for and then executed its leadership of ISAF III (February and August 2003), followed by the NAC decision to take over command of ISAF.

The proposed analytical framework can explain both NATO’s absence and the start of its involvement. In brief, NATO’s strategic culture did not initially encompass fighting a transnational Islamic terrorist movement and did not envision the Alliance operating

¹ “Martti Ahtissaari: international mediator,” *NATO Review*, Vol. 49 (Autumn 2001): 24.

thousands of miles outside NATO territory. In addition, there was no political will on the part of the members to utilize the Alliance against either the Taliban government or al Qaeda, and the Alliance lacked the capacity to deploy and sustain coalition forces in a distant theater of operations. As NATO grappled with its role and purpose in the new security environment, the strategic-level drivers began to change, which ultimately led to NATO assuming command of an adaptive multinational coalition. However, NATO's strategic evolution was gradual and it was also often half-hearted, contradictory, and ineffectual, which had negative consequences when the character of the conflict changed.

A Shattered State and Terrorist Sanctuary

Afghanistan in 2001 was politically, economically, and socially shattered far beyond what Kosovo had been. This along with its austere environment (a high mountainous desert with scattered and isolated fertile valleys) and geographic remoteness made it a particular challenge for international intervention. Before the 1978 communist coup, it had been self-sufficient in food production and undergone halting political, social, and economic development.² However, more than 20 years of war, between 1979 and 2001, destroyed much of the forward progress the country had made. In addition, the wars and associated massive refugee population movements damaged the traditional tribal authority structures which opened a power vacuum into which the Taliban and al Qaeda moved.³

Afghanistan's destruction occurred in two phases and began with the Soviet Union's invasion in December 1979. At the war's height, 115,000 Soviet troops occupied the country. This Soviet-Afghan war was waged primarily in rural areas where the Russians

² A number of scholars have documented the political, economic and social changes within Afghanistan. Two comprehensive accounts are Martin Ewans, *Afghanistan: A Short History of Its People and Politics* (New York: Harper Perennial, 2002), 110-187; and Thomas Barfield, *Afghanistan: A Cultural and Political History* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2010), 164-224.

³ It is estimated that by the end of the 1990s there were some 3.6 million refugees dispersed into camps in Pakistan (2 million), Iran (1.5 million), Russia (20,000), India (17,000) and the Central Asian States (9,000); Kenneth Katzman, *Afghanistan: Current Issues and U.S. Policy* (Washington, DC: Congressional Research Service Report for Congress, August 27, 2003), 29. The destruction of traditional tribal structures has been analyzed by scholars such as Kilcullen, *The Accidental Guerrilla*, 235; also Thomas H. Johnson and M. Chris Mason, "No Sign until the Burst of Fire: Understanding the Pakistan-Afghanistan Border," *International Security*, Vol. 32, No. 4 (Spring 2008): 53-54, 66, 70-71.

executed a methodical strategy to depopulate the countryside and destroy rural infrastructure. Their goal was to “obliterate the rebel’s support environment.”⁴ By the end of the occupation in February 1989, Afghanistan was awash in military equipment, from small arms and ammunition to rockets and heavy weapons, such as tanks, artillery, and SCUD missiles.⁵ The country was also flooded with land mines; according to the UN, some five-to-seven million mines were scattered across the country by 1989.⁶

The various *mujahedin* movements that had formed to resist the Soviet occupation turned against each other in 1992 when the Mohammed Najibullah government collapsed (after Soviet sponsorship ended). The Afghan civil war in the 1990s completed the destruction begun by the Soviets as cities became the new primary battlefields between rival groups vying for power. Kabul, in particular, which had survived intact in the 1980s, “was destroyed, block by block.”⁷ In effect, the “rubblization” policy of the Soviets was duplicated in the cities. A new actor joined the conflict in 1994 when the Taliban, a Pashtun phenomenon, emerged. The civil war never entirely ended, even though the Taliban movement consolidated power over much of the country by 1996, since it was still fighting Ahmed Shah Massoud’s Northern Alliance forces in the Panjshir Valley in the summer of 2001.⁸

By September 2001, Afghanistan was a shattered state,⁹ it was internationally isolated (only Pakistan, Saudi Arabia, and the United Arab Emirates formally recognized the

⁴ Stephen Tanner, *Afghanistan: A Military History from Alexander the Great to the Fall of the Taliban* (Cambridge, MA: Da Capo Press, 2002), 255, 266, 277.

⁵ This was because the Soviets left behind weapons and equipment they did not need to cover their withdrawal and because the Soviet government continued to supply the Najibullah government with food, fuel, ammunition, and military equipment until 1991. Tanner, *Afghanistan*, 271; and Rodric Braithwaite, *Afgantsy: The Russians in Afghanistan 1979-89* (Oxford: University Press, 2011), 296.

⁶ Katzman, *Afghanistan*, 28.

⁷ Tanner, *Afghanistan*, 277-278. Also, Barfield, *Afghanistan*, 248-253.

⁸ Ewans, *Afghanistan*, 253-260; and Barfield, *Afghanistan*, 255-260; and Tanner, *Afghanistan*, 279-287.

⁹ According to USAID, by mid-2001, half of Afghanistan’s population lived in absolute poverty and virtually all of the country’s economic infrastructure and governing institutions were destroyed; USAID Press Office, “USAID Assistance to Afghanistan 2002-2008,” March 27, 2008, <http://www.usaid.gov/press/factsheets/2008/fs080327.htm>. The UN ranked it 173 out of 178 countries on its Human Development Index, calling it “not just one of the poorest countries in the world, but [it] also has the worst human development indicators” (human mortality, poverty, illiteracy, disease); UN Development Program, “Millennium Development Goals in Afghanistan,” 2005, <http://www.undp>.

Taliban government), and it depended on international humanitarian assistance.¹⁰ The Taliban government did not act like a conventional government. It did not rebuild traditional state political, economic, and security institutions, and in fact the leader, Mullah Muhammad Omar, remained largely isolated and interacted with only a small circle of advisors in Kandahar. Ministries in the capital, Kabul, were excluded from decision-making processes and remained “barely functional.”¹¹

The fractured nature of the Taliban’s failed state served the interests of al Qaeda which moved into the country in 1996.¹² The lack of governance structures and ongoing conflict gave al Qaeda freedom to maneuver. It reinvigorated the jihadist training infrastructure that had endured since the 1980s, trained, according to estimates, tens of thousands of jihadists between 1996 and 2001, and continued worldwide terrorist attacks with no interference.¹³ In addition, it made itself useful to the Taliban government by contributing money and troops (Arab fighters) to it and supporting it in its fight against the Northern Alliance.¹⁴

Both the Taliban movement, which emerged from radical Pashtun *madrassas* in Afghan refugee camps in Pakistan, and al Qaeda were founded on similar ideologies which draw on Wahabist, Muslim Brotherhood, and Deobandist teachings and interpretations of Islam.¹⁵ Both are *salafist* and *takfiri* movements. *Salafists* are “followers of the principles of

org/af/MDGs/index.htm.

¹⁰ Neamatollah Nojumi, Dyan Mazurana, and Elizabeth Stites, *After the Taliban: Life and Security in Rural Afghanistan* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2009), 198.

¹¹ Ewans, *Afghanistan*, 262, 267-268; also Barfield, *Afghanistan*, 261.

¹² The group had its origins in the Soviet-Afghan war when Osama bin Laden and Abdullah Azzam, a Jordanian-Palestinian Muslim Brother, created the Afghan Service Bureau (MAK) in 1984 to support the foreign mujahedin. It operated in both Afghanistan and Pakistan. They created al Qaeda out of it in 1988 as the Soviets began withdrawing from Afghanistan and bin Laden took over the organization in 1989 after Azzam was killed. He turned it into a global jihadist front to destroy America and Israel and reestablish the Caliphate by global jihad. Bin Laden moved the organization to Sudan in December 1991 and began supporting radical Islamic groups that engaged in guerrilla warfare and terrorism against apostate Muslim regimes. Al Qaeda also began attacking the United States and its allies in 1993. Western pressure forced the organization out of Sudan in May 1996; Rohan Gunaratna, *Inside al Qaeda: Global Network of Terror* (New York: Berkley Books, 2002), xxii-xxiii, 14, 24-30, 40.

¹³ Ibid., 11, 41, 54, 55.

¹⁴ Ibid., 54, 78, 82.

¹⁵ Gunaratna describes the Wahabist and Muslim Brotherhood influences on al Qaeda; Gunaratna, *Inside Al Qaeda*, 22, 24, 26-36. Various scholars have described the Deobandist, Muslim

the first generation of Muslims” and *salafi* movements, in general, are dedicated to purifying Islam and Islamic society.¹⁶ *Takfiris* hold that Muslims whose beliefs are different from theirs are heretics and thus infidels. They advocate violent jihad to fight all infidels, to overturn apostate Muslim states and establish pure Islamic regimes, and to reinstate the Caliphate.¹⁷ Al Qaeda saw itself as the vanguard of an Islamic movement that was fighting to create a new world order based on this Caliphate and which would eventually defeat the West.¹⁸ The Taliban considered Afghanistan to be an *emirate* in this new order.¹⁹

Over time, through intermarriage, the establishment of businesses and charity activities, the reinvigoration of logistical, training, and funding networks, and the successful creation of order through dispute settlement mechanisms, al Qaeda embedded itself into tribal authority structures and the Pashtun social and geographic terrain.²⁰ This terrain included areas in both Afghanistan and Pakistan, as Pashtun tribal areas spill over both sides of the Durand Line (a boundary between Afghanistan and Pakistan drawn by the British colonial government in 1893, but which the Afghan government has never recognized as its international border with Pakistan).²¹ This cross-border al Qaeda sanctuary was like a natural fortress due to the austere conditions of the high mountain area which was reinforced by the Pashtun social code *Pashtunwali*. *Pashtunwali* shapes Pashtun identity, culture, and

Brotherhood, and Wahabist influences on the Taliban: Ewans, *Afghanistan*, 265; Barfield, *Afghanistan*, 255-257, 261; and Zeyno Baran, “Radical Islamists in Central Asia,” in Hillel Fradkin, Husain Haqqani, and Eric Brown, eds., *Current Trends in Islamist Ideology*, Vol. 2 (Washington, DC: Hudson Institute, 2005), 41-42, 47.

¹⁶ Shmuel Bar, *Warrant for Terror: Fatwas of Radical Islam and the Duty of Jihad* (Lanham, MD: Rowan & Littlefield Publishers, 2006), 105.

¹⁷ Shmuel Bar, “The Conflict between Radical Islam and the West” (working paper, submitted for the Herzliya Conference, Lauder School of Government, Diplomacy and Strategy, Institute for Policy and Strategy, Herzliya, January, 2007), 4, 6-8, 13, 14.

¹⁸ Shmuel Bar and Yair Minzili, “The Zawahiri Letter and the Strategy of al-Qaeda,” in Hillel Fradkin, Hussain Haqqani, and Eric Brown, eds., *Current Trends in Islamist Ideology*, Vol. 3 (Washington, DC: Hudson Institute, 2006), 2, 3, 6, 7.

¹⁹ David Isby, *Afghanistan, Graveyard of Empire: a New History of the Borderlands* (New York: Pegasus Books, 2010), 85-86.

²⁰ Kilcullen, *The Accidental Guerrilla*, 235-236.

²¹ The Durand Line literally cuts Pashtun villages and houses in half. It is also not recognized by the tribes. On the Pakistani side of the line, the Pashtun tribal areas are located in the North West Frontier Province (NWFP), the Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA), and Baluchistan. The FATA is unique because it is divided into tribal agencies (they are: Khyber Agency, Orakzai Agency, Kurram Agency, Mohmand Agency, Bajaur Agency, South Waziristan Agency, and North Waziristan Agency). These agencies are not governed by the Pakistani state, but are autonomous regions with local administration. This autonomy greatly complicated coalition and Pakistani efforts to combat insurgents and terrorists after 2001 since they established new sanctuaries in the FATA.

social organization. Based on the concepts of hospitality (*melmastia*), honor (*nang*), revenge (*badal*), manhood (*meranah*), bravery (*tureh*), the right of asylum (*nanawati*), and the defense of the honor of women (*namus*),²² it was the cultural basis for the safe haven provided to al Qaeda (and the Taliban), both before and after September 2001. As a consequence, the Taliban and al Qaeda were linked by ideology, shared networks, and ties of marriage and blood within *Pashtunwali*.

Taken together, the geography and ideology, the endurance of radical *madrassas* which continued to turn out *talibs* in the 2000s, the deeply embedded logistical, training, and funding networks that crossed the Afghan-Pakistan border (and which overlapped with criminal networks), and *Pashtunwali* were a complex mix that influenced the character of the conflict after 2001. These complicated religious, social, cultural, political, and economic factors were often unappreciated, or underappreciated, by the international coalition but they had implications for coalition strategy. As the international community came to grips with the various interconnected dimensions of the conflict, the coalition strategy slowly expanded. International intervention needed a spark, however, and that spark was the attacks of September 11, 2001.

New Strategic Environment: the West Goes to War

According to one scholar of Al Qaeda, its attacks in New York and Washington, D.C. were intended “to cripple the economic, military and political power of the United States and critically weaken its capacity for retaliation.”²³ They had the opposite effect, since one of the first results was the rallying of NATO around the United States. On September 12th, the NAC invoked Article 5 which triggered the Alliance’s mutual defense guarantee.²⁴ Similarly, the Australian government invoked the mutual defense guarantee of

²² Larry P. Goodson, *Afghanistan’s Endless War: State Failure, Regional Politics, and the Rise of the Taliban* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2001), 15-16.

²³ Gunaratna, *Inside Al Qaeda*, 67.

²⁴ The Article 5 invocation did not become official until October 2nd. The September NAC declaration stipulated that the attacks against the United States would be regarded as an action covered under Article 5 if it was determined that the attacks were directed from abroad. U.S. officials briefed the NAC on October 2nd after which Secretary General Lord Robertson stated, “The facts are clear and compelling. The information presented points conclusively to an Al-Qaida role in the 11

the Australian-U.S. security alliance.²⁵ In addition, UN Security Council Resolution 1368 declared a response by the United States would be legitimate under the terms of the UN Charter, which subsequently led to an EU declaration of solidarity.²⁶ EU leaders later called for regime change in Afghanistan at their summit in Ghent, Belgium on October 19th.²⁷ The declarations had political and military significance, since they indicated the United States had the political backing of a large number of allies to form an anti-terror coalition and it also meant al Qaeda and the Taliban would not just face a U.S. response. NATO's Article 5 activation was not operationalized with concrete actions until October 4th when the United States requested eight specific individual and collective actions. However, none of the actions involved military operations in Afghanistan; instead they were oriented on supporting U.S.-led action in Afghanistan, and the wider war on terrorism.

NATO did not undertake action in Afghanistan because its members did not ask it to do so. The organization was not prepared for such an unexpected strategic challenge and, in effect, strategic level drivers blocked the generation of a decision for action due to factors related to organizational capacity which resulted in an absence of political will. The main inhibitor was strategic culture, that is, the Alliance's security role as conceived by its members and its beliefs about the use of force (when, how, and where it could employ military forces), as articulated in the Alliance's strategic documents. In short, it was not a global security organization and the conduct of such an unusual anti-terror and regime change mission was not within the parameters of what was considered legitimate military activity. Although the 1991 and 1999 strategic concepts had mentioned "acts of terrorism"

September attacks . . . and [the attacks] shall therefore be regarded as an action covered by Article 5 of the Washington Treaty." NATO Speeches, "Statement by NATO Secretary General, Lord Robertson," October 2, 2001, <http://www.nato.int/docu/speech/2001/s011002a.htm>.

²⁵ The security alliance was formally named the Australia-New Zealand-U.S. (ANZUS) Treaty, but it became a security pact between only Australia and U.S. after New Zealand closed its ports to U.S. nuclear-armed and nuclear-powered ships in 1984. Invocation of the treaty served as the basis for Australia's subsequent participation in the war on terror, which included military contributions to operations in Afghanistan. Information provided by Colonel Shane Gabriel, Australian Army (served as the commander of an ISAF battle group battalion in Uruzgan Province, Afghanistan, October 2008-June 2009), interview with author at Carlisle Barracks, PA, April 16, 2013.

²⁶ Luc de Barochez et Philippe G  lie, "Les Quinze l  gitiment la riposte am  ricaine," *Le Figaro*, Septembre 22, 2001.

²⁷ Barry James and Thomas Fuller, "EU Backs U.S. Drive To Replace Taliban," *The International Herald Tribune*, October 20-21, 2001.

as risks in the evolving security environment, this was not translated into military activities within the context of the Alliance.²⁸ Before September 11th, fighting transnational terrorism was not something that NATO's members thought the organization should do. Before 2001 therefore, the Alliance's military planning bodies had not developed any contingency plans to deal with a problem like al Qaeda and the Taliban government. Existing NATO operational plans also did not envision an unusual campaign like the one waged in the fall of 2001 - the use of several hundred covert agents and special operations forces to coordinate the targeting of a bombing campaign and to organize and support the fighting of more than 20,000 indigenous forces against the Taliban and al Qaeda. A NATO official eloquently described the situation:

Part of the problem was that no had ever done this before, and all of us had an image from our schoolboy days that after Article 5 was invoked, the collective armies of the United States and Europe would march off together to slay a common foe. But this conflict is so unconventional that it didn't fit any of those stereotypes of what NATO was all about. Because everyone was anticipating a longer campaign in Afghanistan, there was also a belief that we had more time to develop a military coalition than proved the case.²⁹

Furthermore, no member besides the United States had the means to deploy combat forces thousands of miles from NATO territory and logistically sustain them for a prolonged period of time. The United States possessed the vast majority of the key strategic assets required (airlift, refueling, strategic bombing, intelligence, secure communications, and precision munitions) and this influenced U.S. political will. The U.S. government had no interest in allowing its allies to constrain operational decisions through political conditions tied to military contributions.³⁰ This lack of strategic-level organizational capacity influenced the U.S. position, but domestic politics also influenced it. The Bush administration wanted quick action and an unprecedented form of combat action. The Alliance could not have planned and executed such as innovative operation fast enough to

²⁸ The 1991 Strategic Concept identified fundamental alliance tasks as: dialog, cooperation, collective defense, and crisis management and conflict prevention, "Rome Declaration on Peace and Cooperation." The 1999 Strategic Concept identified: security, consultation, deterrence and defense, crisis management, and partnership; "The Washington Declaration."

²⁹ James Kitfield, "NATO Metamorphosis," *National Journal*, Vol. 34, No. 6 (February 9, 2002): 376.

³⁰ Douglas J. Feith, *War and Decision: Inside the Pentagon at the Dawn of the War on Terrorism* (New York: HarperCollins Publishers, 2008), 51, 86, 90.

suit the preferences of the U.S. government. Leading an ad hoc coalition maximized the U.S. freedom of maneuver. Former U.S. National Security Advisor Condoleezza Rice described the administration's position in her memoir:

It is true that we were capable largely on our own to initiate war against the Taliban. It is also true that, after years of neglecting their military capabilities and concurrent failure to modernize for the war we'd eventually fight, most members of the Alliance were unable to move their military forces quickly. And we were single-minded, bruised, and determined to avenge 9/11 and destroy al Qaeda and its dangerous sanctuary as quickly as possible.³¹

Given the existing conditions of organizational capacity in September 2001, a plausible case could be made that if the United States had asked NATO to lead the international military response, the organization would have declined due to the objection of allies like France (France's subsequent resistance to NATO's taking over ISAF and the merging of OEF and ISAF substantiates this assumption). In a number of ways, the situation was similar to 1990 and Saddam's invasion of Kuwait. The Alliance could not meet the immediate requirements of the new security environment. In recognition of this fact, the United States asked NATO to undertake the activities it could support. The U.S. Permanent Representative to NATO, Ambassador Nicholas Burns, described the U.S. position. He stated the overall effort to defeat the global Islamic terrorist networks would require "a multi-layered global coalition." He argued NATO was an integral part of the coalition and that the U.S. had asked the Alliance for actions and contributions that made best use of its existing capabilities.³² The eight collective and individual activities were: intelligence sharing; assisting allies and partners to defend against terrorist attacks; providing increased security for U.S. and allied facilities; backfilling allied assets that deployed to fight terrorism; providing blanket overflight clearances; providing port and airfield access to all allies; deploying STANAVFORMED to the Eastern Mediterranean (*Operation Active*

³¹ Condoleezza Rice, *No Higher Honor: A Memoir of My Years in Washington* (New York: Crown Publishers, 2011), 79.

³² Nicholas Burns, "NATO: Now More Than Ever" (Speech, Aspen Institute, Berlin, November 12, 2001).

Endeavor); and deploying AWACS to the continental United States (*Operation Eagle Assist*).³³

Just as they had at the end of the Cold War, national governments and NATO had to grapple with how to respond to the changed security environment and their public statements reflected the uncertain and fluid nature of the time. While the allies, and the EAPC partners, repeatedly pledged to work together to “combat the scourge of terrorism,” the Secretary General qualified their support by adding “members shall respond commensurate with their judgment and resources.”³⁴ In particular, the member policy positions on the use of force ranged widely and they changed over time. For example in mid-September, the Italian defense minister initially ruled out contributing any military troops to a response to the terrorist attacks, but later stated Italy might contribute special forces to a NATO response. The German president and chancellor made opposing statements – the president doubted German troops would be involved in a military response while the chancellor refused to rule it out. The French government pledged its solidarity but also warned against a disproportionate military response. Spain pledged its full support with no reservations.³⁵ The initial reluctance of some European countries to contribute air, ground, and naval forces disappeared by October as policy positions converged and the EU legitimized regime change at its summit in Ghent.

As mentioned above, the Bush administration did not turn to NATO partly because its conception of the conflict was broader than just a military effort in Afghanistan. It described the conflict as a fight against global networks of Islamic terrorist groups, led by al Qaeda, and stated the United States would use all its resources to fight them – diplomatic, intelligence, financial, law enforcement, and military. It also saw the conflict as the world’s

³³ NATO Speeches, “Statement to the Press by NATO Secretary General, Lord Robertson, on the North Atlantic Council Decision on Implementation of Article 5 of the Washington Treaty following the 11 September Attacks against the United States,” NATO HQ, Brussels, October 4, 2001, <http://www.nato.int/docu/speech/2001/s011004b.htm>.

³⁴ “NATO reaffirms Treaty commitments in dealing with terrorist attacks against the US,” September 12, 2001, <http://www.nato.int/docu/update/2001/0910/e0912a.htm>.

³⁵ “Europe cautious over US response,” *BBC News*, September 17, 2001, <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/europe/1548441.stm>.

fight, which is why the president called on every nation to join it. While administration officials welcomed NATO's solidarity, it conceptualized that the war on terrorism would be fought by a number of different kinds of coalitions.³⁶

The allies indicated their support for this U.S. position a number of times, which suggested all members were more comfortable coordinating military contributions on a bilateral basis, since it increased their room for maneuver, but it also reflected an unspoken agreement that NATO did not have the organizational capacity to undertake immediate military action in a country so far from continental Europe. In the lead up to combat operations, no member publically pressed the case that NATO should lead military action in Afghanistan; political will was lacking across the board among the allies and so NATO's decision and planning mechanisms were not activated for the initial coalition operation. Instead, in official statements, from the NAC to informal defense minister meetings, the allies reiterated they were ready to assist the United States as required.³⁷ This coincided with the consensus of the time that out-of-area for NATO meant regions peripheral to Alliance territory.

Just like in 1990-1991 in Kuwait, while NATO did not lead action in Afghanistan, it supported it, as did the allies and partners. For example, the countries in Central Asia joined their fellow EAPC members in condemning the 9/11 attacks and they pledged their support in defeating terrorism. They subsequently opened their airspace to the coalition by granting blanket overflight clearances and three of them approved Central Command's (CENTCOM) request to establish critical airbases in Manas, Kyrgyzstan, Dushanbe, Tajikistan, and

³⁶ George W. Bush, "Presidential Address to a Joint Session of Congress, September 23, 2001," in *"We Will Prevail," President George W. Bush on War, Terrorism, and Freedom*, selected and edited by National Review (New York: The Continuum International Publishing Group, 2003), 14-15. Dick Cheney with Liz Cheney, *In My Time: A Personal and Political Memoir* (New York: Threshold Editions, 2011), 330-331. Donald Rumsfeld, *Known and Unknown: A Memoir* (New York: Sentinel, 2011), 353-355.

³⁷ This attitude of support was reflected in the press statement from the "Informal Meeting of Defence Ministers Brussels," September 26, 2001; in the "Statement by NATO Secretary General, Lord Robertson," October 8, 2001; and in the "SACEUR Statement to the Media," October 9, 2001; all statements available at <http://www.nato.int/docu/speech/2001>.

Karshi-Khanabad, Uzbekistan.³⁸ The Alliance's partnership building efforts with countries in Central Asia during the 1990s via the NACC, EAPC, and PfP had facilitated this security outcome, as did copious amounts of U.S. monetary assistance.³⁹ As *Operation Enduring Freedom* (OEF) began on October 7th, with targeted bombing raids and the delivery of humanitarian assistance by U.S. and British forces, the other allies reaffirmed their support, with some, such as Canada, France, Germany, and Italy pledging to contribute military forces in the coming days and weeks.⁴⁰ In early November, President Jacques Chirac acknowledged 2,000 French troops were already involved in operations and his prime minister told the French National Assembly that the country was ready to increase "the density of its support." Chancellor Gerhard Schroeder announced Germany would mobilize some 3,900 specialized troops.⁴¹ The first military "boots on the ground" were special forces from the U.S. and UK (October). They were joined by New Zealand (November) and Canada, Australia, Germany, Denmark, and France (December).⁴² European allies took the new security challenge seriously and they ultimately provided a wide range of ground, air, and naval support, to include special forces, combat and support troops, combat and refueling aircraft, strategic airlift, and a variety of naval assets, such as frigates, resupply ships, and aircraft carrier battle groups, to operations in Afghanistan.⁴³

Thus while initially including only American and British forces, the coalition quickly expanded after October 2001. Contrary to media reporting, the United States did not spurn allied military contributions. General Tommy Franks, the CENTCOM Commander,

³⁸ Lord Robertson, "NATO After September 11," Speech to the Pilgrims of the United States, New York, January 31, 2002, <http://www.nato.int/docu/speech/2002/s020131a.htm> Also, Osman Yavuzalp, "On the front line," *NATO Review*, Vol. 49 (Winter 2001/2002): 24.

³⁹ General Richard B. Myers with Malcolm McConnell, *Eyes on the Horizon: Serving on the Front Lines of National Security* (New York: Threshold Editions, 2009), 177.

⁴⁰ Brian Knowlton, "U.S. and U.K. Bomb Targets in Afghanistan," *International Herald Tribune*, October 8, 2001. Also, John Vinocur, "Schroeder 'Ready' to Provide Anti-Bioterror Forces," *International Herald Tribune*, October 18, 2001; and "Europe's foreign policy: Guess who wasn't coming to dinner?" *The Economist*, November 10, 2001.

⁴¹ Steve Erlanger, "Germany Offers Troops to Help U.S.," *International Herald Tribune*, November 7, 2001.

⁴² Eric Micheletti, *Special Forces in Afghanistan 2001-2003*, trans. Cyril Lombardini (Paris: Histoire & Collections, 2003), 115, 118, 128, 142, 150, 157, 160.

⁴³ Feith, *War and Decision*, 90. Also, personal papers of the author; info from EUCOM Public Affairs background paper, dated April 2002.

briefed the president, defense secretary, and chairman of the joint chiefs of staff on his operational concept for Afghanistan on September 20th. An integral part of his plan was the building of a military coalition whose core was the NATO allies. During the brief, he stated, “America’s NATO partners, as well as Australia, were already lining up to contribute forces and logistical support to a coalition.”⁴⁴

However, the contributions were accompanied by a delicate political-military negotiation process that took time. The negotiation process went something like this: Ally said, “I want to contribute.” CENTCOM staff responded, “What do you want to contribute?” Ally replied, “What do you want?” CENTCOM, “What have you got?” Since the allied armed forces representatives (liaison officers) did not want to put their entire military on the table, they would then describe the ground, air, or naval assets their governments had indicated they were willing to contribute and the staff officers from the two sides then worked to figure out where they could best be integrated.⁴⁵ Unfortunately, the acceptance and integration of coalition forces was frequently not communicated within the contributing nation’s government. In his memoir, former Under Secretary of Defense for Policy Douglas Feith described the complaints the Bush administration received, both publically and through diplomatic channels, from senior government ministers about alleged CENTCOM non-responsiveness to offers, which fed into the inaccurate perception of U.S. unilateralism. He said they eventually unraveled the mystery, “The messages often weren’t flowing clearly or quickly enough from those [liaison] officers to the civilian leaders *of their own defense ministries* – and those officials, in turn, sometimes failed to inform their colleagues in their foreign ministry and prime minister’s office.” The administration resolved the communications problem by devising procedures to deliver acceptance and

⁴⁴ Myers, *Eyes on the Horizon*, 166, 171, 173.

⁴⁵ Author experience in coordinating French, Belgian, and Dutch contributions while she served as the Country Desk Officer for France, Belgium, Luxembourg, and the Netherlands at the U.S. European Command (EUCOM), 2001-2003.

coordination messages to allies and partners through Defense, State Department, and National Security Council channels.⁴⁶

By February 2002, there were 25 nations contributing forces to military activities in Afghanistan (to include 16 of the 19 NATO members).⁴⁷ *Operation Anaconda* in March 2002, OEF's largest ground combat operation thus far and the first major multinational operation, was conducted by more than 2,000 coalition troops from eight nations (Australia, Canada, Denmark, France, Germany, Norway, UK, and U.S.). They were supported by Afghan militia forces and they killed, wounded, or captured hundreds of al Qaeda and Taliban forces who had concentrated in the Shahi Kowt Valley in Paktia Province.⁴⁸ By April 2002, it seemed the allies and partners had stepped up to the plate and were bearing an equal share of the operational burden. The majority of the 11,000 forces in OEF and ISAF were not U.S. (approximately 6,000).⁴⁹

With participation came national caveats. For example, Belgium contributed strategic airlift (C-130 aircraft) but it could be used only for the delivery of humanitarian assistance.⁵⁰ The coordination of national contributions under the terms of various national caveats made the execution of multinational operations and coalition warfare more complex. It also necessitated the establishment of new structures and processes, such as the "coalition village" at CENTCOM headquarters where allied and partner liaison teams worked together and with the CENTCOM staff.⁵¹ Similar multinational coordination structures and processes

⁴⁶ Feith, *War and Decision*, 90-91.

⁴⁷ Personal papers of the author. Information is from a EUCOM Public Affairs background paper that listed coalition contributions to the war on terrorism through the winter of 2002.

⁴⁸ Donald P. Wright with the Contemporary Operations Study Team, *A Different Kind of War: The United States Army in Operation Enduring Freedom, October 2001-September 2005* (Fort Leavenworth, KS: Combat Studies Institute Press, 2010), 127-128, 136-137.

⁴⁹ Personal papers of the author. Information is from a EUCOM Public Affairs background paper that listed coalition contributions to the war on terrorism as of April 2002.

⁵⁰ The assistance was not inconsequential. Belgium volunteered to lead the largest multinational humanitarian assistance mission in history (it included Spain, Netherlands, and Norway). The mission delivered 90 metric tons of UNIMIX (a high protein food supplement) in a matter of weeks to feed starving children in Afghanistan and 250,000 vaccinations for children. The mission set the standard for follow-on humanitarian assistance missions. Personal papers of the author; info is from a EUCOM Public Affairs background paper, dated April 2002.

⁵¹ As of Spring 2002, 27 nations had sent liaison teams to work at CENTCOM headquarters. Personal papers of the author; info is from a EUCOM Public Affairs background paper, dated April 2002.

were eventually created in the ISAF headquarters to facilitate the integration of diverse national contributions.

International military contributions were only one component of an international effort that remained focused on achieving a specific overarching objective throughout the time period under examination in this thesis: to keep Afghanistan from reverting back to becoming a safe haven for transnational Islamic terrorist groups.⁵² This objective was more complex than it at first appeared. It meant the international community had to facilitate the creation of a resilient Afghan state that would be capable of preventing the re-conquest of the country by insurgents and terrorists.

This in turn required a strategy that involved three mutually supporting lines of effort in the domains of security, governance, and economic development⁵³ (thus they echoed NATO efforts in the Balkans). The provision of security was the immediate priority, but over the long term governance and economic development were the more important domains. Initially, the military coalition was faced with defeating the Taliban government, the al Qaeda terrorists, and the insurgent coalition that formed after the Taliban government collapsed, while it rebuilt Afghan security forces (military and police) which were expected to progressively take over the fight. In principle, increasing security would underpin the rebuilding of functioning state institutions, as well as provide space for economic development. Over time the three domains would reinforce each other. For example, functioning governance structures and capable security forces would increase the government's stability and legitimacy, and a functioning national economy would provide the revenue for a self-sufficient state, all of which would protect the country from again becoming a failed state and a terrorist sanctuary. However, executing and calibrating a

⁵² Rice, *No Higher Honor*, 90, 108-109. NATO shared this overall objective, and it remained the Alliance's objective through the end of the ISAF mission in 2014; "NATO and Afghanistan," <http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natolive/69772.htm>.

⁵³ General Richard Myers commented on their relationship: "Political, military, and economic progress . . . You can't ask for just one of those three items to move independently of the others – they have to be linked to advance simultaneously because they are synergistic and build upon and reinforce one another." Myers, *Eyes on the Horizon*, 306. Condoleezza Rice argued a new security concept that linked defense, democracy, and development was needed for a security environment threatened by the combination of failed states and terrorists. Rice, *No Higher Honor*, 148.

complex strategy with multiple lines of effort over a long time horizon is extremely difficult, if not impossible, as the coalitions found in Afghanistan.

In practice, the OEF coalition became involved in all three lines of effort (as ISAF did later) since the conflict never ended, non-military international efforts were often slow to start and develop, and governance and economic development could not wait until after security was established.⁵⁴ Specific elements of the strategy constantly evolved over time (for example, the forms of coalition warfare expanded as the character of the conflict changed) and its implementation was often under-resourced, uncoordinated, and ad hoc. The situation was further complicated by the fact that Afghan institution building was slow and corruption-ridden which over time undermined the faith of Afghan citizens in their government. These failures and weaknesses provided the opportunity for an insurgent coalition to form and for the conflict to continue.

The strategy's three lines of effort relied on the creation of several civilian and military multinational coalitions and initially they were based on a lead nation/lead entity concept.⁵⁵ They also reflected the inter-connected and institutionalized international environment in that contributing nations recognized that the coalition efforts were linked – they depended on each other for long term success. Under U.S. leadership, annual international coordination meetings began in November 2001⁵⁶ and different nations and international organizations volunteered to take responsibility for various efforts. The United Nations took the lead for the political transition process after the Taliban government

⁵⁴ The international efforts were in a kind of catch-22. Economic and political developments were critical for the long term viability of a resilient Afghan state, but aid agencies and other governmental and non-governmental organizations could not operate in insecure areas. National defense establishments tended to possess a preponderance of national capabilities, so military forces, just as they had in the Balkans, got involved in civil and economic development efforts in the expectation that they could help get the efforts started and then turn them over to others as security took hold.

⁵⁵ Rice called this an “adopt a ministry” concept in which allied governments (and international institutions) took responsibility for various functions. She also noted that by late 2002 this concept was “already breeding conflict and incoherence.” Rice, *No Higher Honor*, 191. Douglas Feith was more blunt, declaring the lead nation strategy was a failure; Feith, *War and Decision*, 154. Three examples of civilian coalitions were the diplomatic coalitions represented by UNSCR 1368, EU statements, and NATO's Article 5 declaration, the coalition to freeze terrorist financing, and the coalition for reconstruction and development.

⁵⁶ John B. Taylor, *Global Financial Warriors: The Untold Story of International Finance in the Post-9/11 World* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 2007), 37.

collapsed and assisted Afghan representatives in establishing a transitional government and a roadmap for the creation of a representative government in the Afghan Bonn Agreement in early December 2001.⁵⁷ The United States took the lead for creating and training a new Afghan Army. Germany took up police training, the United Kingdom took the counter-narcotics mission, Italy took up judicial reform, and Japan led the disarmament, demobilization, and reintegration (DDR) program.⁵⁸ No single nation or organization took the lead, however, for reconstruction and economic development and this was ultimately a significant weakness that seriously undermined the overall strategy. Individual nations and organizations, like the World Bank, UN, and Asia Development Bank, pledged funds (which were often slow to be committed) or volunteered for specific projects. This meant the reconstruction efforts were uncoordinated, slow to develop, and at times conflicted with each other. Even after the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) was created it did not become the central coordination point for all economic development, reconstruction, and humanitarian activities. A number of the initiatives were eventually taken up by ISAF (police and counter-narcotics) which further complicated the situation because the Afghan government was forced to deal with conflicting groups of officials from NATO, contributing nations, and a wide range of international organizations.

In the meantime, OEF's campaign plan for military operations relied on a light footprint. Military planners at CENTCOM kept historical and religious lessons in mind as they built the plan and adjusted it over time. They did not want to repeat the mistakes of the British (19th century) or the Russians (1980s) and they did not want to be perceived as an occupation force or as infidel invaders necessitating Afghan resistance for religious

⁵⁷ Rice, *No Higher Honor*, 109. Also, "Government – Afghan Bonn Agreement: Agreement on Provisional Arrangements in Afghanistan Pending the Re-establishment of Permanent Government Institutions," <http://www.afhangovernment.com/AfghanAgreementBonn.htm>.

⁵⁸ George W. Bush, *Decision Points* (New York: Crown Publishers, 2010), 207. Lead nation did not mean only nation. For example, while the United States took the lead for creating and training a new Afghan Army, France contributed to the effort by providing 60 instructors; Jacques Isnard, "Le 'Charles-de-Gaulle', 36 bombes larguées en six mois de mission," *Le Monde*, June 19, 2002.

reasons.⁵⁹ The coalition also did not want to “foster a relationship of dependency.”⁶⁰ Furthermore, as U.S. attention turned to Iraq in early 2003, there was “enormous pressure” on CENTCOM not to “over commit” resources to OEF. In effect, OEF became an economy of force mission for the U.S. government.⁶¹ This concern to keep troop levels low contributed to the creation of a security vacuum that Taliban insurgents exploited.

CENTCOM and OEF commanders and planners benefitted from the fact that violence levels were low for a number of years and this facilitated the coalition’s transition in military operations. They adapted to what they thought was the winding down of the conflict. The adaptation included both new organizational structures and new missions. By early 2002, OEF forces began stabilization and reconstruction efforts in conjunction with combat operations. While U.S. military leaders did not initially envision conducting any nation-building tasks as they built the OEF campaign plan in the fall of 2001, after *Operation Anaconda* they substantially changed OEF’s activities. By mid-2002, OEF was engaged in three lines of effort: security operations; stability and reconstruction operations; and training.⁶² All of these activities were eventually subsumed into ISAF.

The security operations dealt with Taliban and al Qaeda “remnants.”⁶³ In general, OEF forces, comprised of a combat brigade (Combined Task Force-82, CTF-82) and special operations forces assigned to Combined Joint Special Operations Task Force-Afghanistan (CJSOTF-A) (see Appendix 2), conducted pursuit operations, cordon and search operations, and raids to capture or destroy remaining pockets of militants. They destroyed training

⁵⁹ Wright, *A Different Kind of War*, 42-43, 131. President Bush also commented in his memoir that he did not want the coalition to repeat past mistakes or be perceived as occupiers. However, he also admitted forces levels were too low: “But in retrospect, our rapid success with low troop levels created false comfort, and our desire to maintain a light military footprint left us short of the resources we needed. It would take several years for these shortcomings to become clear.” Bush, *Decision Points*, 207.

⁶⁰ Peter W. Rodman, “Post-Conflict Afghanistan,” Statement of the Honorable Peter W. Rodman, Assistant Secretary of Defense of International Security Affairs before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, February 12, 2003, <http://foreign.senate.gov/testimony/2003/RodmanTestimony030212.pdf>

⁶¹ Wright, *A Different Kind of War*, 238-239. Also, Sherwood McGinnis, U.S. State Department (served as the Political Advisor of the United States Mission to NATO, Brussels, Belgium, August 2004-mid-2006; and as Political Advisor of the Commander of ISAF, Kabul, Afghanistan, June 2008-July 2009), interview with author at Carlisle Barracks, PA, April 2, 2013.

⁶² Ibid., 181-184, 200-201.

⁶³ Rodman, “Post-Conflict Afghanistan.”

camps and seized and destroyed arms caches. These operations were multinational and many were small efforts with a limited number of forces, but others were quite large, such as *Operation Anaconda* in March 2002.⁶⁴ Overall, these operations could be considered strategic failures, since coalition forces rarely engaged directly with organized enemy elements after the spring of 2002 and they never completely eliminated the militants. The operations were not counter-insurgency efforts, since there was not a perception that an active insurgency existed and military forces did not permanently secure the population. Instead coalition forces launched their operations from bases at Bagram, Kandahar, and a handful of small forward operating bases (FOBs) in southeastern Afghanistan and returned to the bases when operations were complete.⁶⁵ As such, the lack of physical control of the Afghan countryside contributed to the security vacuum.

Humanitarian assistance activities were integrated with the security operations. For example, during *Operation Village Search* in October 2002, civil affairs teams assessed medical conditions and identified potential reconstruction projects.⁶⁶ Furthermore, since ISAF's initial mandate was limited to Kabul and international reconstruction and economic development pledges were frequently slow to be honored,⁶⁷ the OEF commander created a new organizational element and started civil-military operations to jump start civil, economic, and reconstruction activities in the provinces. This effort surpassed the CIMIC efforts in the Balkans. The Combined Joint Civil-Military Operations Task Force (CJCMOTF) did far more than coordinate humanitarian, governance, and economic development activities among governmental and non-governmental organizations. It also managed Coalition Humanitarian Liaison Cells (CHLCs) in ten cities throughout

⁶⁴ Wright, *A Different Kind of War*, 184-186, 211. The major named operations after *Anaconda*, conducted by U.S., Australian, British, Canadian, Romanian, and Afghan forces, were: *Operation Mountain Lion* (April-July 2002), *Operation Mountain Sweep* (August 2002), *Operation Alamo Sweep* (September 2002), *Operation Village Search* (October 2002), *Operation Mongoose* (January 2003), *Operation Viper* (February 2003), and *Operation Valiant Strike* (March 2003).

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, 211.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, 216.

⁶⁷ Taylor, *Global Financial Warriors*, 33. The United States was as slow and unreliable as the other aid donors when it came to honoring its commitments. For example, it took more than a year for the U.S. to start work on the ring road due to a variety of procedural and bureaucratic delays; Jeanne Cummings, "Bush Learns from Afghanistan," *The Wall Street Journal Europe*, April 14, 2003.

Afghanistan which directly provided assistance on the ground. These small six-man cells were popular and successful at providing “quick impact” assistance in 2002, especially in unsecured areas where NGOs did not operate, but the Afghan needs for development, reconstruction, and humanitarian assistance were massive. Much more needed to be done, and faster, and so the CHLC’s inspired the creation of the Provincial Reconstruction Teams (PRT)⁶⁸ an innovative organizational structure that fully merged the civil-military efforts.

While the idea for the PRTs began germinating in the spring of 2002, the concept was not fleshed out or proposed to the Hamid Karzai government until the fall. After the transitional government’s approval, the OEF command element, CJTF-180, established three U.S.-led pilot PRTs in 2003 in Gardez (January), Bamiyan (March), and Kunduz (April). The other members of the coalition were encouraged to participate in the effort. As a consequence, in July the UK established a fourth PRT in Mazar-e-Sharif⁶⁹ and New Zealand’s government decided to take over the Bamiyan PRT.⁷⁰

The PRTs were intended to make the reconstruction effort more effective by combining representatives from the lead nation’s defense, foreign, and aid agencies into one focused team. Team size varied depending on the local security conditions, but in general it ranged from 70-100 personnel, of which the vast majority were troops (60-80) who provided force protection and support services to the rest of the PRT. The teams worked directly with local Afghans to coordinate the humanitarian, governance, and reconstruction projects that were most needed in their areas. Since representatives from the Afghan transitional government (such as Agriculture and Education Ministries) were included in the coordination chain, the PRTs were also intended to extend the reach of the new government and enhance its legitimacy.⁷¹ For the OEF coalition, the PRTs represented the beginning of

⁶⁸ Wright, *A Different Kind of War*, 193-195, 197, 223.

⁶⁹ Ibid., 226-227.

⁷⁰ Mark Burton, “New Zealand to lead Provincial Reconstruction Team in Afghanistan,” Minister of Defence, New Zealand government, July 7, 2003, <http://www.beehive.govt.nz/node/17264>.

⁷¹ Information from interviews of officers who led PRTs, including Lieutenant Colonel Mindaugas Steponavicius, Lithuanian Army (served as the chief of staff of a multinational Provincial Reconstruction Team in Chaghcharan, Regional Command-West, ISAF, Afghanistan, May-October 2006), interview with author at Carlisle Barracks, PA, January 31, 2014; and author interview at

the official transition away from combat operations and toward a primary focus on stability operations.⁷²

The PRTs also bridged the ISAF mandate problem. Since ISAF was not present outside Kabul, where there were critical requirements for major reconstruction efforts, the PRTs filled the gap. However, they were not popular with many NGOs who felt coalition military forces were getting involved in work that exceeded their range of expertise. They also feared PRT activity would undermine the traditional neutrality of NGOs. Some also believed the teams would be perceived as military occupation forces by provincial Afghans.⁷³ In the end, they were not and, in general, the teams were well-received. The PRTs however, did not solve the security problem. The transitional government had virtually no presence outside Kabul and both it and the coalition were aware that Taliban and al Qaeda remnants continued to exist within various communities. In addition, various political, military, and criminal groups began vying for power in the security and governance vacuum.⁷⁴

Therefore, as part of the expansion of coalition efforts into stability operations, the training of the new Afghan security forces (ANSF) – army and police – began. The training efforts were meant to strengthen the new government by building its capability to provide security within the country. Germany refurbished the police academy in Kabul and began a comprehensive five year program in mid-2002 that concentrated on traditional law enforcement training for the new Afghan National Police (ANP). To manage the effort to build the ANA, CENTCOM created the Office of Military Cooperation-Afghanistan (OMC-A) in February 2002. While it was a military organization that fell under CJTF-180 in May, it was also part of the American ambassador's country team and it was oriented on security-related governance issues identified in the Bonn Agreement; specifically, working with the nascent Afghan Defense Ministry to create an army. OMC-A was "the main thrust of the

Carlisle Barracks, PA with Officer A (who served in a Provincial Reconstruction Team in Afghanistan), December 27, 2012 .

⁷² Rodman, "Post-Conflict Afghanistan."

⁷³ Wright, *A Different Kind of War*, 228-229.

⁷⁴ Ibid., 181-182.

coalition's effort to assist the new Karzai government" and it was "the most active proponent of governance operations in 2002."⁷⁵

OMC-A got to work in an on-the-fly manner which was necessitated by the CENTCOM commander's desire to quickly build capable indigenous security forces so that the coalition could withdraw quickly. According to an officer who worked in the OEF headquarters, the coalition was optimistic it could quickly build sufficient ANA forces and rapidly turn everything over to the Afghans and then leave (this was grossly inaccurate as it turned out). He stated in the interview, "We're going to keep the environment secure long enough for the Afghan system of government to kick in through the loya jirga process . . . and we're going to start the ANA out on a good footing." In fact, he added that the U.S. forces were so convinced they would not be in the country very long that they were not allowed to build any permanent headquarters or billeting infrastructure. Their command was literally a tent city in Bagram.⁷⁶ The OEF coalition was in such a hurry that the first set of Afghan recruits reported for their 10-week training in May 2002 before funds and resources were in place. The American special forces trainers began organizing the training of this first new Afghan battalion while OMC-A was finalizing negotiations with the interim government to use the Kabul Military Training Center (KMTC) as the basic training facility. To further complicate matters, the trainers graduated the first three Afghan army battalions (between July and October) while leaders in ISAF and OEF were still negotiating with the Afghan government over the size and shape of the new ANA. It was not until December 2002 that Karzai approved the plan to build a 70,000 soldier ANA.⁷⁷

The training effort was further complicated by the existence of the Afghan Military Forces (AMF). The AMF was the collective term for the *mujahedin*, Afghan armed forces, and armed groups who had fought with the coalition to remove the Taliban government. The

⁷⁵ Ibid., 198-199, 229.

⁷⁶ Lieutenant Colonel Mark Holler, U.S. Army (served as the G3 Battle Captain in Headquarters, CJTF-180, Bagram, Afghanistan, May-November 2002; also served as a brigade operations officer of a combat unit in Regional Command-East, ISAF, Afghanistan, January 2007-January 2008), interview with author at Carlisle Barracks, PA, November, 15, 2013.

⁷⁷ Wright, *A Different Kind of War*, 200-201, 230.

Bonn Agreement declared these groups would come under the control of the interim authority and that they would “be reorganized according to the requirements of the new Afghan security and armed forces.”⁷⁸ The idea was that some of the officers and soldiers would be integrated into the ANA and the rest demobilized. However, the Japanese-led DDR program did not get off the ground until April 2003, many of the troops were unsuitable for the new ANA, and many of the armed groups proved more loyal to their local leaders and provincial governors (often called “warlords”) than to the central government.⁷⁹ Furthermore, elements of the AMF continued to operate with the coalition in 2002 and 2003 because of the slow growth of the ANA and the pressure to include Afghan units in security operations.⁸⁰

The scale of the ANA development plan was huge. The coalition in effect committed itself to building a national armed force from the ground up. The plan envisioned creating both combat and support units (with their necessary equipment), the bases and infrastructure required for the training programs as well as the operational units, a small air force, and a fully functioning defense ministry and general staff.⁸¹ Coalition members involved in the effort included the British who took over noncommissioned officer (NCO) training, the French who took over officer training, and the Bulgarian, Mongolian, and Romanian armies who agreed to provide specialized training on Soviet-designed weapons and equipment. By the fall of 2002, the OMC-A commander realized his staff was too small for the mission. He convinced CJTF-180 to create a new organization, Combined Joint Task Force Phoenix (CJTF Phoenix), which stood up in June 2003 to manage the training. It was built upon a U.S. infantry brigade comprised of about 1,000 conventional soldiers who took over the training mission from the special forces. Besides organizing trainers into mobile training teams (MTT) to maximize the efficiency of basic training, OMC-A and CJTF

⁷⁸ Afghan Bonn Agreement.

⁷⁹ Afghanistan’s New Beginnings Programme (ANBP), <http://www.undpanbp.org/introduction-to-anbp/>.

⁸⁰ Wright, *A Different Kind of War*, 213, 217.

⁸¹ Combat Studies Institute interview of General Karl Eikenberry, who was the Chief of OMC-A at the time, Micheal G. Brooks, ed., *Eyewitness to War Volume III: US Army Advisors in Afghanistan* (Fort Leavenworth, KS: Combat Studies Institute Press, 2009), 17-18.

Phoenix also created embedded training teams (ETT) who accompanied the new Afghan battalions to their operational assignments and continued training them and mentoring them during actual operations.⁸²

As the OEF coalition undertook the humanitarian, reconstruction, and training missions it believed it was entering a phase of the campaign where combat operations were tailing off, while stability operations increased. However, the perception that the conflict was largely over in 2002-2003 was premature. The unconventional campaign fought in the fall of 2001 was spectacularly successful and it killed thousands of Taliban and al Qaeda fighters but it did not result in a decisive defeat of either movement. Even though the Taliban government collapsed more quickly than expected, the key leadership of both movements and many fighters fled to Pakistan (to both the autonomous regions and the cities) where they found sanctuary.⁸³ For several years, the Taliban and al Qaeda primarily focused on regrouping and establishing control of regions within Pakistan's Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA). The enduring Pashtun tribal, Taliban, and al Qaeda networks were resuscitated, new insurgent fighters were recruited from the radical *madrassas*, and *Pashtunwali* provided the cultural foundation for both the reconstitution efforts and the safe haven.⁸⁴

By mid-2002, Taliban leaders had established a base in Quetta and they constituted the Quetta Shura Taliban (QST), a leadership council under Mullah Omar.⁸⁵ This organization was different from Taliban rule in Afghanistan as three regional *shuras* were established under the QST in Quetta, Peshawar, and Miram Shah. Together they led and coordinated a loose coalition of former and new Taliban members and groups sympathetic to the Taliban (the new movement was sometimes called the neo-Taliban). Groups that

⁸² Wright, *A Different Kind of War*, 231-233.

⁸³ Jason Burke, *The 9/11 Wars* (New York: Allen Lane, 2011), 303. Also, Peter L. Bergen, *The Longest War: The Enduring Conflict between America and al-Qaeda* (New York: Free Press, 2011), 248, 253.

⁸⁴ Johnson and Mason, "No Sign until the Burst of Fire," 41-42, 55, 59.

⁸⁵ Burke, *The 9/11 Wars*, 303. One scholar calls the Quetta Shura "a national umbrella insurgent movement;" Jeffrey Dressler, "The Afghan Insurgent Group That Will Not Negotiate," *The Atlantic*, October, 2010.

affiliated themselves with the Quetta Shura Taliban included Gulbuddin Hekmatyar's Hizb-i-Islami Gulbuddin (HiG) and Jalaluddin Haqqani's Haqqani Network. Altogether they formed a loose insurgent coalition that continued to rely on al Qaeda for mass appeal, funding, resources, and training.⁸⁶ Some fighters from these groups infiltrated into Afghanistan to conduct attacks; they were joined by militants hiding in Afghanistan.

Militant activity throughout 2002 and 2003 was limited which meant violence levels remained low. The activity included: sporadic use of improved explosive devices (IEDs) and car bombs; assassinations of Afghan officials and attacks against Afghan civilians and aid workers; sporadic rocket, artillery, and mortar attacks on Afghan and coalition compounds throughout the country; and some limited organized attacks by militants – such as ambushes.⁸⁷ The level and frequency of violence slowly increased during the two years.⁸⁸ Given the generally low level and disparate violence, the largely counter-terrorism-like security operations of OEF seemed appropriate, although the heavy handed nature of some search-and-destroy and raid techniques contributed to undermining support for the coalition among Pashtun communities who already resented their loss of political power in the new government. This made them ripe for exploitation by the emerging insurgent coalition which had undertaken a new three-phase campaign in Afghanistan: infiltrate and establish contact with potential allies (through oral and written communications, threats such as the infamous night letters, or violence if necessary); establish permanent areas of influence, base areas, and shadow authority structures; and then move into organized military action.⁸⁹

The goal of the insurgent campaign was to challenge the authority of the new Afghan government and to counter its state-building efforts. Ultimately the reconstituted

⁸⁶ Personal papers of the author; information is from a briefing given by Jeffrey Dressler, an analyst at the Institute for the Study of War, entitled "Afghanistan's Insurgent Groups," to students at the U.S. Army War College on January 27, 2011.

⁸⁷ Wright, *A Different Kind of War*, 228, 239-240. Also, Robert D. Crews and Amin Tarzi, *The Taliban and the Crisis of Afghanistan* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2008), 283-284.

⁸⁸ According to Rand scholars there were 10 attacks of all kinds in the 1st quarter of 2002, 30 attacks in the 4th quarter of 2002, and nearly 40 in the 4th quarter of 2003; Wright, *A Different Kind of War*, 240.

⁸⁹ Burke, *The 9/11 Wars*, 304, 308-310; also Antonio Giustozzi, *Koran, Kalashnikov, and Laptop: The Neo-Taliban Insurgency in Afghanistan* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2008), 99.

Taliban movement wanted to force the international coalition to withdraw and re-establish an Islamic emirate.⁹⁰ Phase I of the campaign began in late 2002 and it moved into Phase III in 2006.⁹¹ With this incremental insurgent strategy, the character of the conflict slowly started to change, just as NATO was adapting.

NATO Starts to Adapt and Gets Involved in Afghanistan

A shift in NATO's strategic culture was the first and most substantial adaptation and it began to change as OEF got underway and ISAF was established. The realization that modern civilization gives extremist terrorist organizations potentially enormous destructive power, particularly groups like al Qaeda that overtly sought weapons of mass destruction,⁹² changed Alliance member perceptions about the role and purpose of NATO going forward. By December 2001, allied foreign and defense ministers started thinking about how NATO needed to change and adapt and what it should do to combat terrorism. Specifically, military authorities were tasked to develop "a military concept for defence against terrorism" by the Prague Summit scheduled for November 2002.⁹³

A further impetus for the shift in strategic culture was the recognition that Europe already had experience with jihadists. Al Qaeda's sanctuary in Afghanistan had facilitated attacks in Europe. From the early 1990s, al Qaeda had established relationships with some 30 terrorists groups worldwide. It inspired and assisted them both directly and indirectly. Beginning in the 1990s, Islamic radicals in these affiliated groups opened a second front in their war against apostate regimes by attacking the United States and its allies. They perceived that they could not "bring about change in their home countries . . . without

⁹⁰ Crews and Tarzi, *The Taliban and the Crisis of Afghanistan*, 275, 292.

⁹¹ Giustozzi, *Koran, Kalashnikov, and Laptop*, 99; and Burke, *The 9/11 Wars*, 308-310.

⁹² Al Qaeda actions were based on Islamic jurisprudence as expressed in modern *fatwas* by radical clerics. They sanction suicide bombing, mutilation of dead bodies, the killing of non-combatant women, children and elderly, and the use of weapons of mass destruction. Shmuel Bar, "Jihad Ideology in Light of Contemporary Fatwas" (Research Monographs on the Muslim World, Series No. 1, Paper No. 1, Center on Islam, Democracy, and the Future of the Muslim World, Hudson Institute, Washington, DC, August, 2006), 1, 10-15.

⁹³ NATO Press Release, "NATO's Response to Terrorism," Statement issued at the Ministerial Meeting of the North Atlantic Council held at NATO Headquarters, Brussels, on 6 December 2001, <http://www.nato.int/docu/pr/2001/p01-159e.htm>; and NATO Press Release, "Statement on combating terrorism: Adapting the Alliance's Defence Capabilities," Statement of defense ministers, Brussels, December 18, 2001, <http://www.nato.int/docu/pr/2001/p01-173e.htm>.

directly challenging Western military power, economic strength and cultural influence.”⁹⁴

As a consequence, Europe was attacked repeatedly. For example, the al Qaeda-affiliated Algerian jihadist group *Groupe Islamique Armé* (GIA) hijacked an Air France flight in December 1994, intending to crash it into the Eiffel Tower, but it was stopped while the plane was refueling in Marseille (3 killed). In 1995, the GIA waged a four-month bombing campaign against the Paris metro system (8 killed, 200 wounded). Scores of terrorist bombing plans were foiled, such as the attempts by the al Qaeda-affiliated *Groupe Salafiste pour la Prédication et le Combat* (GSPC) to bomb the Strasbourg Christmas market (December 2000), the U.S. Embassy in Paris, the U.S. Consulate in Marseille, and a munitions depot in Belgium (July 2001), and the U.S. Embassy in Rome (February 2002). Other foiled GIA-linked plots included plans to bomb an Antwerp synagogue and the Kleine Brogel military base in Belgium (September 2001), the Strasbourg cathedral (November 2002), and the Russian Embassy in Paris (December 2002). Attacks against Europeans abroad included the bombing of an ancient synagogue in Tunisia (April 2002, 19 killed), the bombing of French naval engineers in Karachi, Pakistan (May 2002, 14 killed, 34 wounded), and the bombing of the French oil tanker *Limburg* off the coast of Yemen (October 2002, 1 killed). As European police and security services arrested jihadists in the aftermath of 9/11 they discovered extensive, interconnected terrorist networks all over Europe – which indoctrinated, recruited, trained, supplied and fund-raised, as well as carried out attacks within Europe and outside it.⁹⁵ These networks were linked to the al Qaeda sanctuaries in Afghanistan and Pakistan.

Protecting Europe therefore meant eliminating the sanctuary in Afghanistan, and this led to the objective of building a resilient Afghan state which further meant nation-building. Stabilization and reconstruction missions, like those that NATO had undertaken in the Balkans, would need to be repeated, on a much larger scale, in Afghanistan. While

⁹⁴ Gunaratna, *Inside Al Qaeda*, 7, 8.

⁹⁵ U.S. Department of State, “Country Reports on Terrorism,” <http://www.state.gov/j/ct/rls/crt>. Also, Steven Emerson and the Investigative Project on Terrorism, *Jihad Incorporated: A Guide to Militant Islam in the US* (New York: Prometheus Books, 2006), 133, 138, 145-148.

President Bush noted in his memoir that he changed his mind about nation-building after 9/11, his administration was not interested in leading these types of missions and so it supported the Afghan proposal from the Bonn Agreement for the establishment of a UN-authorized international security force led by someone else.⁹⁶ Discussions within NATO and at national political levels about a possible peace operations role started shortly after 9/11 as the Alliance grappled with its place in the new security environment. In November 2001, some Alliance members proposed that NATO provide security to peacekeepers in Afghanistan, but others, such as France, disagreed and the proposal died.⁹⁷ Turkey had indicated in the fall of 2001 that it was willing to lead some sort of post-conflict peace operation, but the collapse of the Taliban government occurred faster than expected and it could not react quickly enough to take the lead of the newly authorized International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) in December 2001.⁹⁸ However, the United Kingdom could and so it volunteered to lead the first rotation.⁹⁹ ISAF's mandate was limited to assisting the newly created Afghan interim administration in establishing security in Kabul and facilitating reconstruction efforts. It also operated in coordination with UNAMA after it was created in March 2002 by UNSCR 1401.¹⁰⁰

The UK originally only volunteered to lead ISAF for three months,¹⁰¹ but it extended its command for an additional three months because the negotiations for Turkey to take over as the next lead nation were more difficult than expected (it required funding and assistance with strategic airlift, logistics, and communications and the United States eventually agreed to provide them), therefore the change of command did not occur until

⁹⁶ Bush, *Decision Points*, 205, 207.

⁹⁷ Judy Dempsey, "Britain explores peacekeeping role for NATO in Afghanistan," *Financial Times*, March 13, 2002.

⁹⁸ Alan Sipress, "Turkey Ready to Lead Afghan Peacekeeping Force," *Washington Post*, December 6, 2001.

⁹⁹ Sean Rayment, "1,000 British troops to spearhead security role," *The Telegraph*, December 16, 2001.

¹⁰⁰ "History, ISAF – International Security Assistance Force," <http://www.isaf.nato.int/history.html>. Also, United Nations Security Council, "Resolution 1386 (2001)," Adopted by the Security Council at its 4443rd meeting, on 20 December 2001, <http://www.isaf.nato.int/archives.html>; and United Nations Security Council, "Resolution 1401 (2002)," Adopted by the Security Council in its 4501st meeting, on 28 March 2002, <http://www.un.org/docs/scres/2002/sc2002.htm>.

¹⁰¹ Michael Smith, "Turks Plan to Take Over from British," *The Telegraph*, January 3, 2002.

June 2002.¹⁰² Negotiations for the next lead nation began immediately, with Germany and the Netherlands agreeing to jointly lead ISAF III.¹⁰³ Turkey was required to extend its rotation by two months due to demands by German and Dutch trade unions for security guarantees for the troops which slowed down the negotiations. The United States ultimately agreed to guarantee the safe withdrawal of German and Dutch troops in the event of an emergency evacuation.¹⁰⁴ Elements of the 1 (German/ Netherlands) Corps deployed to Kabul and comprised the core of the ISAF III headquarters from February to August 2003.

Each of the first three ISAF rotations was multinational. The force numbered about 4,500 troops in ISAF I and increased to about 5,000 in ISAF II and III. Both NATO and partner nations contributed: 18 nations in ISAF I (12 NATO and 6 partners); 21 nations in ISAF II (10 NATO and 11 partners); and 28 nations in ISAF III (13 NATO and 15 partners). ISAF activities consisted primarily of patrolling, helping with the training of new Afghan security forces, and participating in humanitarian and reconstruction projects. The ISAF force itself was composed of three components (see Appendix 2): a headquarters element, a multinational brigade (which engaged in the day-to-day patrols and civil-military efforts), and an airport task force (which initiated the rehabilitation of the Kabul International Airport).¹⁰⁵ Given the wide variation in national troop contributions - from a few troops (from Austria, Iceland, and Ireland) to thousands (Canada, Germany, Poland, and the UK) – the burden-sharing was widely disproportionate. In effect, some nations did little more than grant political legitimacy by their presence.

While recognizing continuing disparate violence, the coalition perceived the conflict was largely over because the “large-scale fighting” was over.¹⁰⁶ A senior British commander

¹⁰² “Afghanistan: Turkey agrees to take ISAF command,” *IRIN News*, May 1, 2002.

¹⁰³ “Germans, Dutch will take over Afghan security force: Turkey will turn over command in February ’03,” *Stars and Stripes*, December 4, 2002.

¹⁰⁴ Personal papers of the author; information is from an email dated January 15, 2003 sent to the author from the U.S. Army Attaché in The Hague. The email contained an English translation of an article published in the Dutch newspaper *Algemeen Dagblad*. The English translation of the article’s title was “US guarantees the safety of Dutch troops in Kabul.”

¹⁰⁵ Diego A. Ruiz Palmer, “The road to Kabul,” *NATO Review* (June 1, 2003), <http://www.nato.int/docu/review/2003/Wake-Iraq/road-Kabul/EN/index.htm>.

¹⁰⁶ “Rebuilding Afghanistan; The war against terrorism,” *The Economist*, June 8, 2002.

in Afghanistan assessed that al Qaeda and the Taliban no longer posed a great threat in May 2002 and he predicted OEF's offensive operations would end within weeks because "they're not showing a predisposition to reorganize and regroup to mount offensive operations against us."¹⁰⁷ U.S. Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld went as far as declaring that major combat operations were over during a visit to Afghanistan in May 2003, adding that "the bulk of this country today is permissive, it's secure."¹⁰⁸ According to one western journalist, "For around eighteen months it was possible to travel anywhere without concern for anything other than the appalling state of the roads . . ."¹⁰⁹ The light footprint of both OEF and ISAF (in April 2002 there were 6,500 OEF troops and 4,500 ISAF troops; by mid-2003 the combined troop levels stood at 17,000)¹¹⁰ seemed to be justified by a security environment where most of the violence occurred in the south and southeast of the country.

Even with the relatively minimal violence, the existence of a security vacuum was recognized as a problem, so the Karzai government, the UN Secretary General, and various NGO's asked that ISAF's mandate be expanded outside Kabul and the number of peacekeepers increased. Despite repeated requests from the interim government, the contributing nations refused.¹¹¹ Turkey in particular agreed to assume leadership of ISAF II on the condition that the mandate was not expanded beyond Kabul. Its resistance was partly due to concerns about cost, but also partly because it feared "a backlash at home" if its soldiers killed fellow Muslims.¹¹² The United States kept the debate alive when the Bush administration announced a policy shift in September 2002. It stated it supported expanding ISAF's mandate.¹¹³ However, the proposal was initially resisted. The EU's envoy to Afghanistan, Francesc Vendrell, asserted expanding ISAF outside Kabul "was 'virtually

¹⁰⁷ "The invisible enemy; Afghanistan," *The Economist*, May 18, 2002.

¹⁰⁸ Wright, *A Different Kind of War*, 237.

¹⁰⁹ Burke, *The 9/11 Wars*, 78.

¹¹⁰ See Appendix 4 for coalition force levels over time.

¹¹¹ "Stand by me; America and Afghanistan," *The Economist*, April 20, 2002; "Special Report: So much done, so far to go – Afghanistan," *The Economist*, June 8, 2002; "How to rebuild a country; Afghanistan," *The Economist*, August 31, 2002.

¹¹² "Stand by me; America and Afghanistan;" Also, "Unhappy new year; Afghanistan," *The Economist*, March 23, 2002; "Special Report: So much done, so far to go – Afghanistan;" and "How to rebuild a country; Afghanistan."

¹¹³ "Securing the peace; Afghanistan," *The Economist*, September 14, 2002.

impossible at the moment' because European governments do not have the resources."¹¹⁴ The issue of the mandate continued to percolate for another year until the fall of 2003. It took time for national policy positions to converge on such a significant change.

Furthermore, despite the low violence levels and perception the conflict was over, the international negotiation and coordination effort to identify successive lead nations for ISAF was painful; nations were not eagerly lining up to command a rotation. Negotiations were also time-consuming and they had taken longer than expected for the Turkish and GE/NL rotations. The successive change in lead nation for ISAF I through III was also inefficient, since each new lead nation had to start from scratch – learning the nuances of a fairly complex situation and executing a difficult deployment and logistics effort to set up a completely new headquarters with new equipment.¹¹⁵ According to a NATO officer, "It became really, really hard. It became really messy." As a consequence, key national governments and the NATO and UN Secretaries General had "open discussions about how to help Afghanistan in an orderly fashion" and as such they continued to explore NATO's potential role.¹¹⁶ Among other meetings, Prime Minister Tony Blair met with Bush administration officials to discuss expanding NATO's missions.¹¹⁷ However, NATO's eventual involvement in Afghanistan was not a given and it took almost two years for incremental shifts in political will and organizational capacity to occur before the organization took over leadership of ISAF in August 2003.

A major shift in NATO's strategic culture occurred first and it opened the door to its eventual involvement in Afghanistan. The German defense minister, Rudolf Scharping, indicated the shift in thinking about NATO and the out-of-area debate when he argued in early May 2002 that the Alliance had to be ready to defend its vital security interests

¹¹⁴ "Insecure; Afghanistan," *The Economist*, September 14, 2002.

¹¹⁵ Palmer, "The road to Kabul."

¹¹⁶ Colonel (retired) Phil Evans, U.S. Army (served as Chief of Operations, Joint Operations Center, HQ ISAF, Kabul, Afghanistan, August 2003-February 2004; he was otherwise assigned to NATO's third tier headquarters in Heidelberg, 2001-2005 and helped coordinate the first deployment of a NATO headquarters to Afghanistan after the Alliance took over responsibility for ISAF), interview with author at Carlisle Barracks, PA, December 27, 2012.

¹¹⁷ Cheney, *In My Time*, 372.

anywhere – to include Europe “or some other corner of the world.”¹¹⁸ Later that month, at the NATO ministerial in Reykjavik, Alliance foreign ministers formally announced the organization’s global role when they reiterated their “determination to combat the threat of terrorism for as long as necessary,” as well as deal with other strategic threats to members and, to that end, to acquire the capabilities necessary to “field forces that can move quickly to wherever they are needed” and sustain them over distance and time.¹¹⁹ President George Bush reinforced the shift in NATO’s strategic culture when he stated he wanted the Alliance “to play a central role in the war against terrorism,” during a trip to Europe later that month. He added the new role required a new strategy and new capabilities. However, the difficult road ahead for NATO’s adaptation was highlighted by a statement from the German foreign minister, Joschka Fischer, when he said his country was not prepared to increase defense spending.¹²⁰

NATO’s global perspective was codified at the Prague Summit in November 2002 and it was expressed in a series of measures to strengthen the Alliance’s ability to meet contemporary security challenges, regardless of where they originated. The measures included the announcement of a new anti-terrorism concept, a major organizational structural change, and a plan to modernize NATO capabilities. Allied leaders repeated their commitment to combat terrorism for as long as necessary and they envisioned different ways of dealing with it. The official new military concept on terrorism was framed within the traditional defensive posture of the Alliance. It identified various intelligence sharing, civil preparedness, and consequence management measures to protect allied populations, territory, and forces, and thus did not relate to on-going operations in Afghanistan. However, allied leaders also stated their intention to deter, disrupt, defend, and protect against terrorist attacks, as and where required, which implied activity outside NATO

¹¹⁸ “Special Report: The future of NATO; a moment of truth,” *The Economist*, May 4, 2002.

¹¹⁹ Personal papers of the author; information is from a May 14, 2002 cable from the American embassy in Reykjavik which quotes the text of the final communiqué from the May 14th North Atlantic Council Ministerial in Reykjavik, Iceland.

¹²⁰ “Special report: Europe and America; old friends and new,” *The Economist*, June 1, 2002.

territory.¹²¹ The other changes indirectly related to Afghanistan but in effect built the capabilities the Alliance would need for its subsequent wide-ranging activities within the country.

The major organizational change was the decision to transform the military command structure. The two strategic commands, ACE and ACLANT, were to be transformed into Allied Command Operations (ACO) and Allied Command Transformation (ACT). This change was significant because it moved the Alliance away from its traditional regional and geographic focus (on Europe and the Atlantic) and toward a functional focus. It facilitated efforts to streamline and reduce the number of operational and component headquarters,¹²² but more importantly it institutionalized the change in NATO's mindset about out-of-area operations. The transformation gave the Alliance the organizational capacity to manage global operations. This was an overdue capability, since the Alliance had taken small steps toward operating further out-of-area than the Balkans after the 9/11 attacks. As a result of the American request for collective actions on October 4, 2001, seven NATO AWACS aircraft patrolled the airspace over the continental United States (*Operation Eagle Assist*) for seven months, from October 2001 to May 2002¹²³ and naval forces began patrolling the Mediterranean Sea (*Operation Active Endeavour*) to deter and detect terrorist-related activity and protect shipping.¹²⁴ It took a larger step towards global operations with the NAC approval, in October 2002, of the German and Dutch request for the Alliance to assist them with the planning and execution of ISAF III. Not only did SHAPE host a force generation conference in November, but during the GE/NL ISAF rotation it also facilitated information sharing among the contributing nations (which included NATO and EAPC

¹²¹ NATO, "Prague Summit Declaration, Issued by the Heads of State and Government participating in the meeting of the North Atlantic Council in Prague on 21 November 2002," <http://www.nato.int/docu/pr/2002/p02-127e.htm>.

¹²² Air Vice-Marshal Andrew Vallance, "A radically new Command Structure for NATO," *NATO Review* (September 1, 2003), <http://www.nato.int/docu/review/2003/NATO-Strategic-Partners/EN/index.htm>.

¹²³ In total, 830 crews from 13 NATO nations patrolled U.S. airspace in the course of 360 operational sorties; NATO, "Statement by the Secretary General on the conclusion of Operation Eagle Assist," April 30, 2002, http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natolive/news_19412.htm.

¹²⁴ NATO, "Operation Active Endeavour."

members and New Zealand), it gave them access to NATO intelligence and communications networks, and it assisted with coordinating air transportation requirements.¹²⁵ The Alliance did not know at the time that this activity would continue for the next 12 years.

The transformation of the strategic commands created a streamlined chain of authority and command that gave the Alliance a plug and play capacity that turned out to be very useful for Afghanistan. After NATO took over ISAF, the strategic and operational command chain never changed (NAC for political direction – ACO at SHAPE for strategic direction – JFC at Brunssum for operational direction – ISAF headquarters in Kabul for operational execution), while the 6-monthly rotations of ISAF headquarters elements continued. Even though the Prague Summit had also created the NATO Response Force (NRF), it was not the only deployable headquarters and the Alliance continued a practice it had established with SFOR and KFOR. Between August 2003 and the end of the ISAF mission it deployed the various NATO component commands, as well as affiliated European commands (ARRC, NATO Rapid Deployable Corps-Italy, NRF, Eurocorps, allied land component commands, etc.) through Kabul.

The third significant measure announced at Prague was the capabilities initiative. It was a result of what Secretary General Lord Robertson called “Europe’s military incapability.”¹²⁶ The Prague Capabilities Commitment (PCC) improved on the 1999 Defense Capabilities Initiative (DCI) by focusing on acquiring the most urgently needed capabilities and attempting to get firm promises from national governments that they would deliver.¹²⁷ In some areas the capability shortfalls were not just a gap, but a chasm: in the spring of 2003 the United States had 250 long-range transport aircraft, the UK had four, and there were none in the remaining allied nations.¹²⁸ This capabilities gap fed European

¹²⁵ Palmer, “The road to Kabul.”

¹²⁶ Robertson, “NATO After September 11.” Also, Gregory Piatt, “NATO’s Robertson: ‘We must adapt.’ Sept. 11 showed alliance members that defense budgets have to rise, militaries must be faster, lighter,” *Stars and Stripes*, December 30, 2001.

¹²⁷ Edgar Buckley, “Attainable targets,” *NATO Review* (September 1, 2002), <http://www.nato.int/docu/review/2002/Capabilities/EN/index.htm>.

¹²⁸ Michelle MacAfee and Bruce Cheadle, “Afghanistan decision changed NATO: Robertson,” *St. John’s Telegram (Newfoundland)*, May 7, 2003.

concerns that it would encourage U.S. unilateralism.¹²⁹ While many of the capabilities were critical for subsequent operations in Afghanistan, the initiative was only partially successful. There was progress in the purchasing and leasing of sea lift, for example, but serious shortfalls in air lift and aerial refueling remained for years after Prague.¹³⁰ This was an area where structural organizational capacity continued to lag due to domestic restraints on defense spending in many NATO members, and which only intensified after the global financial crisis. As such, this was a fraying force that never dissipated and it contributed to enduring Alliance tensions over burden-sharing.

After Prague, allied governments continued thinking about NATO's role in Afghanistan. For example, the Bush administration continued to press the Alliance to assume a greater role in the country.¹³¹ Consequently, NATO experienced a "watershed moment" in April 2003 that was on the order of its decision to become involved in the Balkans in the 1990s.¹³² The NAC agreed to take over responsibility for ISAF. This open-ended, out-of-area decision was unprecedented in the organization's history, and it was surprising considering it was made during a contentious time – during the lead up to and invasion of Iraq. The Iraq issue could have been a hugely damaging fraying force but paradoxically it was not. The Iraq war was deeply divisive, both among European nations and between Europe and the United States. While there was general agreement something needed to be done about the Saddam Hussein regime, there was disagreement on timing and processes (i.e., continue to use the UN and diplomacy or use force to remove the regime). It was not a case of all European nations opposing the United States. Eighteen European nations expressed their support for Bush administration policy in two joint declarations of

¹²⁹ Denis Staunton, "Aznar keen to ensure EU toes the US security line," *Irish Times*, February 5, 2002.

¹³⁰ Paul Gallis, *The NATO Summit at Prague, 2002* (Washington, DC: Congressional Research Service, March 1, 2005), 3.

¹³¹ Sherwood McGinnis, U.S. State Department.

¹³² NATO Secretary General, Lord Robertson, "Remarks at the Atlantic Councils Salute to the New NATO," May 5, 2003, <http://www.nato.int/docu/speech/2003/s030505b.htm>.

solidarity that were published in European newspapers in January and February 2003.¹³³

Germany, France, Belgium, and Luxembourg, however, vocally and vociferously opposed U.S. policy and the movement towards military intervention. Statements by political leaders increased the rancor. For example, Defense Secretary Rumsfeld referred to France and Germany as “problems” in the Iraq crisis and dismissed them as old Europe in January.¹³⁴ President Chirac exacerbated the tensions after an EU summit on February 18th when he “derided those Central and East European countries that have signed letters expressing their support for the United States as ‘childish,’ ‘dangerous,’ and missing ‘an opportunity to shut up.’”¹³⁵

The actual Iraq intervention on March 20, 2003 was multinational (some 40 countries provided ground, air, and/or naval forces, or logistical or other support). The ground force totaled 183,000 soldiers and Marines, the vast proportion of which were U.S., but it also included 41,000 British, 4,000 Australian, 1,300 Spanish, and a contingent of Polish special forces.¹³⁶ At the same time, seven NATO aspirants were moving toward Alliance accession. They attended a signing ceremony for the protocols of accession in Brussels on March 26th.¹³⁷ Some of the countries felt they were put in a position where they had to choose between the United States and Europe, and this they wanted to avoid.¹³⁸ In the meantime, the allies were searching for the successor to the German/Netherlands Corps as

¹³³ The January letter was signed by Czech Republic, Denmark, Hungary, Italy, Poland, Portugal, Spain, and United Kingdom. The February letter by Albania, Bulgaria, Croatia, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Macedonia, Romania, Slovakia, and Slovenia. Mark Champion, “Eight European Leaders Sign Letter Backing U.S.,” *The Wall Street Journal Europe*, January 30, 2003; and “‘New Europe’ backs EU on Iraq,” *BBC News*, February 19, 2003, <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/europe/2775579.stm>.

¹³⁴ “Outrage at ‘old Europe’ remarks,” *BBC News*, January 23, 2003, <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/Europe/2687403.stm>.

¹³⁵ “Chirac Upsets East Europe by Telling It to ‘Shut Up’ on Iraq,” *New York Times*, February 18, 2003.

¹³⁶ Myers, *Eyes on the Horizon*, 240.

¹³⁷ NATO, “Introduction by NATO Secretary General, Lord Robertson at the extraordinary meeting of the Council with the participation of Bulgaria, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Romania, Slovakia and Slovenia,” March 26, 2003, http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/opinions_20614.htm.

¹³⁸ Tom Lansford and Blagovest Tashev, eds., *Old Europe, New Europe and the US: Renegotiating Transatlantic Security in the Post 9/11 Era* (Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2005), 159, 270, 273. Also, Radek Sikorski, “Bush in Krakow, Among True Allies,” *The Wall Street Journal Europe*, May 30-June 1, 2003.

the lead for ISAF. By early April, there were no volunteers and the ISAF commander admitted “there’s a little bit of panic” about it.¹³⁹

By April, there was a desire to bring the Alliance back into harmony,¹⁴⁰ to try to get past all the acrimony, since there continued to be serious international challenges that needed to be addressed, including additional terrorist attacks, and the rebuilding of Afghanistan, not to mention NATO efforts at transformation and enlargement. Civilian and military leaders at NATO perceived that the mission in Afghanistan “seemed to be done . . . the kinetics were done . . . all you’ve got to do is help [the Afghans] help themselves.” Taking over ISAF would be “honorable . . . and you’ve got all the people on the ground anyway.” The fact there were few combat operations “made the mission easier for everyone to undertake.”¹⁴¹ For national political leaders, therefore, there were both moral/ethical and practical reasons for NATO to get involved. As a consequence, France “dropped its opposition to NATO taking the lead in Afghanistan’s military operations,”¹⁴² enabling the NAC’s decision to take over command of ISAF on April 16th, at the formal request of Germany, Netherlands, and Canada.¹⁴³ Essentially, this was a non-contentious way to bring the allies back into harmony and give them an area where they could work together cooperatively. In a way, the decision was easy because NATO had already become formally involved during the ISAF III rotation. There was also continuing consensus that Afghanistan would need international assistance over the long term, so the stabilization mission was essential, it was considered legitimate, and it was welcomed by the Afghans. The NATO commitment was also a way for the allies to signal to the Afghan people that the

¹³⁹ “No Volunteers Yet for Next Afghan Peacekeeping Mission: ISAF Commander,” *Agence France Presse*, April 8, 2003.

¹⁴⁰ Sherwood McGinnis, U.S. State Department. Also, NATO, “Press statement by NATO Secretary General, Lord Robertson: Following the meeting of the North Atlantic Council at the level of Foreign Ministers,” April 3, 2003, <http://www.nato.int/docu/speech/2003/s030403b.htm>. Guy Chazan, “U.S., Turkey Move to Fix Breach,” *The Wall Street Journal Europe*, April 3, 2003. Christopher Rhoads and Ian Johnson, “Schröder Backs Ouster of Hussein from Iraq: Chancellor Shifts Stance on War in Attempt to Mend Fences in Europe, with U.S.,” *The Wall Street Journal Europe*, April 4-6, 2003. “MM. Chirac et Bush renouent le dialogue,” *Le Monde*, April 15, 2003.

¹⁴¹ Colonel (retired) Phil Evans, U.S. Army.

¹⁴² “Paris Spring,” *The Wall Street Journal Europe*, April 17-20, 2003.

¹⁴³ NATO Spokesman Yves Brodeur, “Press Briefing,” April 16, 2003, <http://www.nato.int/docu/speech/2003/s030416a.htm>.

international community would not abandon them this time, as it had done before. The decision was also based on the flawed assessment that the conflict was largely over and that stabilization and peace-building would be the primary security mission going forward. The allies were confident in their ability to execute such a peace operation given their experience in the Balkans. In the end, Iraq contributed to the convergence of political will with regards to Afghanistan, due to a shared desire to get past the acrimony, which when combined with the shift in strategic culture (global focus) and the perceptions of the conflict led to the decision to take over ISAF.

The convergence in political will that underlay the decision also manifested NATO's new global perspective as announced at Prague in a concrete way. At the time, the Secretary General, Lord Robertson, framed Alliance involvement in Afghanistan as necessary to deal with international terrorism and the instabilities generated by failed states (through drug and refugee flows)¹⁴⁴ but the allies were also modest in their initial vision. They agreed to execute the ISAF mission under the prevailing UN mandate and did not discuss expanding operations outside of Kabul. As military planners began developing the operational plans for NATO's assumption of the ISAF mission, they estimated they would be ready to assume the ISAF lead as the GE/NL rotation ended in August 2003.¹⁴⁵ Given the extensive experience military authorities had in planning and executing combat and peace operations in the Balkans, which included multiple rotations of command elements through SFOR and KFOR, this task was likely simple and straightforward.

While an effort was made to clearly distinguish between OEF and ISAF, one NATO official calling them "wholly distinct in nature and purpose,"¹⁴⁶ and the attempt was made to articulate the difference in ISAF's Military Technical Agreement with the Afghan interim authorities,¹⁴⁷ the lines separating their activities quickly blurred. For example, even though

¹⁴⁴ Robertson, "Remarks at the Atlantic Councils Salute to the New NATO."

¹⁴⁵ Brodeur, "Press Briefing."

¹⁴⁶ Palmer, "The road to Kabul."

¹⁴⁷ Wright, *A Different Kind of War*, 182. The Military Technical Agreement specified that ISAF had a narrow scope of operations that was codified in a bilateral contractual relationship with the new Afghan government. OEF was associated with the war on terrorism, however this labeling was

the United States had agreed to be lead nation for building the new Afghan army, British forces within ISAF began training a battalion of what was called the Afghan National Guard in February 2002, several months before the U.S. training effort had started within the structure of OEF and before coalition forces and the Afghan government had agreed on the shape and size of the new Afghan National Army (ANA). Similarly, the first units trained by OMC-A were assigned to the first corps activated for the ANA, the 201st Corps, or Central Corps, based in Kabul. Once the units arrived in the capital, ISAF forces provided specialized training, such as checkpoint training by the Italians.¹⁴⁸ In some cases, OEF and ISAF were directly linked. For example, between October 2002 and April 2003 a tri-national detachment of 18 Danish, Dutch, and Norwegian F-16 fighters and one Dutch KDC-10 tanker provided day and night air support to both OEF and ISAF.¹⁴⁹

Despite the emphasis of the contributing nations on maintaining a light footprint, to a remarkable degree, the OEF and ISAF coalitions came together quickly and were able to seamlessly execute operations in very short order in austere and remote locations. Besides the multinational ground operations mentioned earlier (such as *Operation Anaconda*), by the spring of 2002, eight nations were working closely together at the Manas air base. Six American and six French bombers were supported by tanker aircraft from Australia and France, and transport aircraft from Denmark, the Netherlands, Norway, and Spain, while South Korea provided medical support to the entire base. One journalist credited American commanders with being able to “quickly [master] the tricky art of integrating forces from a number of nations.”¹⁵⁰ The mastery was more likely a result of solid organizational capacity and cultural familiarity developed through the experiences of operating together in the Balkans and decades of training and planning activities among NATO and partner nations.

already passé by the summer of 2002 when the U.S.-led coalition began training, humanitarian, and reconstruction/development operations.

¹⁴⁸ Combat Studies Institute interview of General Karl Eikenberry, *Eyewitness to War Volume III*, 36-37.

¹⁴⁹ The detachment was called the European Participating Air Forces (EPAF) detachment; J.A.C. Lewis and Joris Janssen Lok, “French Mirages Hand Over Afghanistan Duties,” *Jane’s Defence Weekly*, October 9, 2002.

¹⁵⁰ “Americans in a strange land; a new force in Central Asia,” *The Economist*, May 4, 2002.

Operational cooperation and interdependence did not mean contributing nations were in unison. The allies and partners had joined the civil and military multinational coalitions, volunteered to be lead nations, and in some cases made contributions that were historic, such as the British government's deployment of 1,700 marines and army artillery in March 2002, which was the country's largest combat deployment since the 1991 Gulf war.¹⁵¹ However, this did not mean they agreed totally with U.S. policy on Afghanistan (or the wider war on terrorism). Early on, the EU warned against a disproportionate military response and the potential for civilian casualties from collateral damage.¹⁵² The French president emphasized that military action was insufficient to fight international terrorism and the long term solution for Afghanistan was political, not military.¹⁵³ There was also consistent concern about U.S. unilateralism. However, throughout this period allies and partners stayed engaged and cohesion endured within the OEF and ISAF coalitions. This was somewhat surprising given there was no vital security threat, so the stakes were low. In addition, the coalitions became larger over time and nations did not drop out as free-riders even though the burden-sharing was widely disproportionate.

The operations in Afghanistan were not something for which NATO had been created, but the organization slowly adapted to the changed security environment, when members agreed it needed to change. More importantly, members also achieved consensus that the Alliance needed to be global. For the major decisions related to ISAF, individual members triggered the decision-making processes when they requested the organization provide support to ISAF and then take over the mission. Interestingly, it was not the most powerful members of the Alliance who initiated these decisions.

National reasons for contributing forces for both OEF and ISAF were varied and political will was derived from both alliance and domestic influences. Besides the direct experience of terrorist attacks and plots by Western European nations, the new NATO members and the aspirants shared the concerns about the threat of international terrorism.

¹⁵¹ "Unhappy new year, Afghanistan."

¹⁵² Luc de Barochez, "Les Quinze en vedette américaine à Gand," *Le Figaro*, Octobre 19, 2001.

¹⁵³ Luc de Barochez, "Chirac renouvelle son soutien à Bush," *Le Figaro*, Novembre 7, 2001.

More importantly, they wanted to fulfill the obligations of Alliance membership, or hoped to increase their chances of joining the Alliance as full members sooner rather than later by participating in the coalition.¹⁵⁴ This political will was the initial impetus for coalition cohesion. As the conflict changed and a variety of fraying forces surfaced, the allies would need operational adaptation to sustain it over time.

By the summer of 2003, as NATO prepared to take over the next rotation of ISAF, there had been positive and negative developments in the country over the previous two years. The political transition road map was being executed largely on time. A *loya jirga* to select the transitional government had met in June 2002, a constitutional commission wrote a new constitution and presented it to the Karzai government in March 2003, and planning for a constitutional *loya jirga* (scheduled for October 2003) and voter registration (for the 2004 national election) was on track. On the development side, girls returned to school in the spring of 2002 for the first time since the Taliban came to power and a total of some three million children were enrolled in school.¹⁵⁵ Economically, the newly introduced national currency, the afghani, was accepted and stable and the IMF estimated GDP growth in 2002 had been 28%.¹⁵⁶ Mobile phone systems had been built in several cities, major infrastructure projects had started, and Afghanistan, Pakistan, and Turkmenistan signed a deal to build a gas pipeline through Afghanistan.¹⁵⁷ Finally, more than two million refugees returned home.¹⁵⁸

But there were also significant problems. Many of the returned refugees had no homes or jobs. Mortality and disease rates remained high.¹⁵⁹ Opium poppy production exploded,¹⁶⁰ which funded not only the provincial governors who resisted the authority of

¹⁵⁴ "Special report: The future of NATO." Also, Lansford and Tashev, eds., *Old Europe, New Europe and the US*, 144, 150, 155, 164, 182, 205, 212, 215, 221, 224, 228-229, 244-245, 259, 266-268. Also, Tuomas Forsberg and Graeme P. Herd, *Divided West: European Security and the Transatlantic Relationship* (London: Chatham House, 2006), 71-72.

¹⁵⁵ Kenneth Katzman, *Afghanistan: Current Issues and U.S. Policy* (Washington, DC: Congressional Research Service, August 27, 2003), 12-14.

¹⁵⁶ "Not a dress rehearsal; Afghanistan," *The Economist*, August 16, 2003.

¹⁵⁷ "The rebirth of a nation; Afghanistan," *The Economist*, January 11, 2003.

¹⁵⁸ "Not a dress rehearsal."

¹⁵⁹ Ibid.

¹⁶⁰ "The rebirth of a nation."

the central government (some of them were still called “warlords”), but also criminal elements and the emerging insurgent coalition. The training of army and police forces was too slow, leading to a security vacuum where violence increased, particularly in the south and southeast. By the summer of 2003, aid agencies and the UN suspended their activities in the south due to the danger. Donors were also slow to honor their aid pledges. Although some \$4.5 billion had been pledged at the 2002 international conference in Tokyo, only \$1 billion had shown up.¹⁶¹ Perhaps the most significant problem was the rogue provincial governors, or “warlords.” Even though former war heroes like Ismail Khan made Herat one of the safest cities in Afghanistan, the fact they maintained independent militias, engaged in local rivalries, and resisted and undermined the authority of the Karzai government (by, for example, Khan keeping customs duties), made them a challenge that had to be addressed.¹⁶² Many of them were also brutal, corrupt, and unpopular with local citizens.¹⁶³ Worst of all, the fact that the OEF coalition continued to support some of the “warlords,” and relied on some local militias and armed groups to hunt down remnants of al Qaeda and the Taliban undermined the purpose of the DDR program and the building of a legitimate government with effective army and police forces.

Against this backdrop, the OEF and ISAF coalitions (numbering 11,000 and 6,100 respectively by August 2003) can be credited with some achievements by the summer of 2003. Most, if not all terrorist training camps were destroyed. ISAF helped produce a safe and booming Kabul.¹⁶⁴ OMC-A had trained 7,000 Afghan soldiers, although due to high attrition rates (which would be an enduring problem), only 4,000 turned up to serve in units.¹⁶⁵ ANA troops were, however, operating in various locations, such as Bamiyan, where villagers said they felt safer due to the army’s presence and the activity of the PRT.¹⁶⁶ The PRTs were contributing to governance and economic development requirements in four

¹⁶¹ “Not a dress rehearsal.”

¹⁶² “The emir of the west; Afghanistan,” *The Economist*, July 19, 2003.

¹⁶³ Ibid. Also, Burke, *The 9/11 Wars*, 306.

¹⁶⁴ “Not a dress rehearsal.”

¹⁶⁵ Wright, *A Different Kind of War*, 261.

¹⁶⁶ “It’s not awful everywhere; Afghanistan,” *The Economist*, July 5, 2003.

regions. However, the PRTs were a drop in the ocean compared to the massive requirements, the training efforts were insufficient, and strategically the enemy had not been vanquished. The coalitions underestimated how long and difficult the training efforts would be, the difficulty of the governance and economic development lines of effort, the danger posed by the sanctuaries in Pakistan, and the immense security gap problem in the provinces. The inaccurate assessment by the coalitions that combat operations were tailing off and their lack of appreciation for the resilience of the Taliban and al Qaeda movements, exacerbated by the institutional weakness and corruption of the Afghan government, helped create the conditions for the emergence of the insurgent coalition. The NATO decision to take over ISAF was made with little appreciation for what the Alliance was getting itself into because it did not understand that the character of the conflict was changing.

CHAPTER 4

AUGUST 2003-SEPTEMBER 2008: NATO GETS INTO THE GAME

As NATO prepared to take over ISAF, an overwhelming majority of Afghans supported the international mission and were more worried that foreign troops would leave the country prematurely than stay too long.¹ The Alliance's strategic-level adaptations after 9/11 (expanded strategic culture, new missions, transformed organizational command structures) had laid the support foundations for NATO-led ISAF operations. Both NATO and the ISAF coalition had a sense of confidence about the mission based on prior experiences (rotating commands, conducting stability operations) and an expectation that ISAF would be operating in a relatively benign environment in Kabul.² From 2003 and through 2005, the members of the coalition also had the sense the war was largely over since violence levels were relatively low and combat activity seemed to be concentrated in limited areas in the south and east.³ In fact, in 2005 U.S. commanders assessed that the cumulative effect of four years of combat, combined with the political and economic developments, "had weakened the insurgency to the point of virtual irrelevance."⁴ Condoleezza Rice expressed the Bush administration's optimism after her visit to the country as the Secretary of State in March 2005, "In 2005 we thought that the Afghan project was in relatively good shape."⁵

These assessments turned out to be inaccurate because, after a period of reconstitution, insurgent activity and violence gradually increased and expanded geographically. By 2006 the insurgent coalition was able to launch a number of large,

¹ Burke, *The 9/11 Wars*, 78.

² Colonel (retired) Phil Evans, U.S. Army.

³ Colonel Horst Busch, German Army (served as a battalion commander in ISAF's multinational brigade, Kabul, Afghanistan, August 2004-February 2005; and as a Senior Mentor and Team Leader, Operational Mentoring and Liaison Team, Mazar-e-Sharif, Regional Command-North, ISAF, Afghanistan, June 2011-February 2012), interview with author at Carlisle Barracks, PA, April 11, 2013. "General Götz Gliemeroth: ISAF Commander," *NATO Review* (December 2003), <http://www.nato.int/docu/review/2003/Kosovo-Kabul/EN/index.htm>; LTG Rick Hillier, "Great Expectations," *NATO Review* (April 2004), <http://www.nato.int/docu/review/2004/Before-Istanbul/EN/index.htm>; David Fox, "Italy becomes international force in Afghanistan," *Reuters*, August 4, 2005.

⁴ Kenneth Katzman, *Afghanistan: Post-War Governance, Security, and U.S. Policy* (Washington, DC: Congressional Research Service Report for Congress, November 1, 2007), 22.

⁵ Rice, *No Higher Honor*, 345.

organized attacks. Because the insurgency progressively worsened to the point where Taliban forces actually held terrain, there was a widespread perception that ISAF was failing by 2007-2008.⁶ Despite the negative perception, members of the coalition stayed engaged. This was due to the two drivers identified in the analytical framework. The ISAF commander, General David Richards, starkly articulated the collective strategic political reason for the enduring commitment even as the conflict escalated in 2006: “We can’t afford to lose this. And we will dig deeper if we have to. If NATO doesn’t succeed in the south, it might as well pack up as an international military alliance.”⁷ Thanks to existing organizational capacities, the coalition was able to learn and subsequently adapt operationally. In effect, ISAF continually evolved as it created, or assumed control of, new command and control structures and undertook new missions as the coalition recognized it was in the middle of a complex conflict. The combination of the two drivers sustained cohesion and, in the end, ISAF settled down to fight back as well as rebuild.

The adaptation was not smooth or problem-free. One could argue this period (August 2003-September 2008) was characterized for the ISAF coalition by a posture of continuously playing catch-up, because it seemed to be constantly reacting to a situation that progressively worsened. The overall goal remained unchanged (prevent Afghanistan from reverting back to becoming a safe haven for terrorists by assisting in the creation of a stable and secure Afghanistan),⁸ and the strategy remained what came to be called “the Comprehensive Approach” at the Riga Summit in November 2006.⁹ That is, civilian and military efforts in the domains of security, development, and governance, but ISAF’s

⁶ The assessment of failure was expressed in articles, speeches, and books, such as: Timo Noetzel and Sibylle Scheipers, “Coalition Warfare in Afghanistan: Burden-sharing or Disunity?” (briefing paper, Chatham House, London, October 2007), 1, 7; Kurt Volker, “State’s Volker’s Speech on Afghanistan, NATO – Why Both Matter” (Remarks to the Konrad Adenauer Stiftung, Washington, DC, February 4, 2008); Frank Ledwidge, *Losing Small Wars: British Military Failure in Iraq and Afghanistan* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2011); and Tim Bird and Alex Marshall, *Afghanistan: How the West Lost Its Way* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2011).

⁷ King, *The Transformation of Europe’s Armed Forces*, 27-28.

⁸ NATO, “Istanbul Summit Communiqué, Issued by the Heads of State and Government participating in the meeting of the North Atlantic Council,” June 28, 2004, http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natolive/official_texts_21023.htm.

⁹ NATO, “Riga Summit Declaration, Issued by the Heads of State and Government participating in the meeting of the North Atlantic Council in Riga on 29 November 2006,” http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natolive/official_texts_37920.htm.

operational approach shifted to encompass counter-insurgency (COIN) operations (as did OEF). However, even though combined OEF and ISAF troop numbers gradually increased from about 17,000 in August 2003 to over 60,000 in February 2008 (see Appendix 4), none of the contributing nations committed adequate resources to pull off the strategy and succeed along the three lines of effort, let alone succeed at COIN.

This chapter will cover the major developments in both ISAF and OEF during this period, as the commands progressively converged. It will also highlight the changing character of the conflict, how the coalition responded, and why cohesion endured during both the “easy” times (2003-2005) and the “hard” times (2006-2008).

NATO Deploys and Expands

NATO’s assumption of ISAF followed a deliberate institutional process that began with decisions by political authorities. As mentioned in the previous chapter, the NAC announced in April 2003 that the Alliance would take over the ISAF mission. The NAC would exercise overall political direction, in close consultation with non-NATO partners, and SHAPE would exercise strategic planning, coordination, command, and control of ISAF. Procedurally this would entail the deployment of successive “composite headquarters” with personnel augmentation, as necessary, from within NATO and from contributing nations, as well as communications and logistic support. Furthermore, the SACEUR would choose who the ISAF commander would be from among the contributing nations. After the formal announcement, the NAC subsequently tasked the military bodies to plan for and execute the ISAF IV rotation, as well as the subsequent rotations (see Appendix 3).¹⁰ While NATO’s assumption of lead for ISAF provided long-term coherence and stability to the overall command situation, the frequent headquarters rotations meant the problem of “learning from scratch” endured for each unit, even for those that deployed more than once. However, this was mitigated somewhat because many of the staff personnel were rotated in and out of Kabul in a staggered way. This was considered a positive because it

¹⁰ Brodeur, “Press Briefing.”

made the basic structure more permanent but it also meant some of the staff members were always on a steep learning curve.

In recognition of the inherently civilian-military nature of NATO's engagement in Afghanistan, the NAC created the position of Senior Civilian Representative (SCR) in October 2003. The SCR acted as the civilian counterpart of the ISAF commander and co-located with him in the headquarters. As such, the SCRs represented "the political leadership of the Alliance in Kabul." The NATO Secretary General appointed the successive SCRs, all of whom were experienced European diplomats, parliamentarians, or senior government ministers. Their key roles included communicating NATO policy and its political-military objectives to local and international media, and liaising and coordinating with the Afghan government and civil society, UNAMA, the EU, other representatives of the international community and international organizations, and representatives of neighboring nations to facilitate development and reconstruction efforts and support the political process.¹¹ This did not mean things progressed smoothly. According to Ambassador Fernando Gentilini, the SCR between 2008 and 2010, "The truth is that when it comes down to coordination, everyone wants to coordinate and nobody wants to be coordinated."¹² To an extent the SCRs were just another voice in the cacophony of actors pursuing what were frequently independent agendas. However, they also served as a direct communication channel between ISAF, NATO headquarters in Brussels, and the NAC. This meant they could provide critical advice from a political and diplomatic perspective to Alliance leaders as they grappled with how to ensure coherence among the security, economic development, and governance lines of efforts.

The unit designated to form the core nucleus of ISAF IV, the Joint Command Center in Heidelberg (one of the Alliance's two land component commands), received its

¹¹ NATO, "NATO's Senior Civilian Representative in Afghanistan," http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/topics_50096. Between 2003 and 2014, there were six SCRs: Hikmet Çetin (Turkey, 2003-2006), Daan Everts (Netherlands, 2006-2007), Fernando Gentilini (Italy, 2008-2010), Mark Sedwill (UK, 2010-2011), Simon Gass (UK, 2011-2012), and Maurits Jochems (Netherlands, 2012-2014).

¹² Fernando Gentilini, *Afghan Lessons: Culture, Diplomacy, and Counterinsurgency* (Washington, DC: Brookings Institution Press, 2013), 26.

alert order in June. Since it could only deploy about half its staff (due to ongoing operational and exercise commitments in other theaters), SHAPE convened a force generation conference that merged together the 120 deploying members of the command with staff officers and specialized elements that were already in country and other new national contributions. The new headquarters rotation (about 240 personnel) occurred in parallel with a new multinational brigade rotation led by Canada. The combined ISAF force included 6,100 troops from 31 nations.¹³

The Alliance's assumption of ISAF was almost a routine organizational action. It had a highly developed organizational capacity to take over this limited mission. It had extensive experience from the SFOR and KFOR rotations, both in the actual deployment of a succession of commands and in the types of missions performed. It had a command structure that readily provided units for deployment as well as training and operational direction since the transformation announced at the 2002 Prague Summit was complete: in 2003, Allied Command Europe (ACE) became Allied Command Operations (ACO) and Allied Command Atlantic (ACLANT) became Allied Command Transformation (ACT).¹⁴ In addition, the Alliance's consultation and decision bodies met routinely, with Afghanistan at the top of their agendas, the military planning bodies were in constant action,¹⁵ and senior military leaders from SHAPE and JFC Brunssum traveled to Afghanistan almost every month.¹⁶ The NATO ambassadors visited the country annually. The contact was not only one way. Besides formal written reports from the ISAF Commander and the SCR, ISAF hosted a weekly video teleconference with JFC Brunssum and the ISAF commander travelled to Belgium periodically to brief civil and military leaders on what was happening in the country, the status of progress or problems, and the coalition's operational plans.¹⁷

¹³ Colonel (retired) Phil Evans, U.S. Army.

¹⁴ "A radically new command structure for NATO." ACO developed the operational template for ISAF and ACT provided training.

¹⁵ Colonel (retired) Phil Evans, U.S. Army; and Gentilini, *Afghan Lessons*, 56.

¹⁶ Colonel (retired) Tucker Mansager, U.S. Army (served as Executive Assistant to the SACEUR, Mons, Belgium, October 2007-July 2009), email exchange with author, May 31, 2016.

¹⁷ Sherwood McGinnis, U.S. State Department.

When NATO assumed command of ISAF on August 11th, 2003, its mission was no different from the previous rotations – conducting operations in Kabul and its environs “in order to support and assist the Afghan Transitional Authority in developing a safe and stable environment.” In practice, ISAF performed political and military functions and the German commander, Lieutenant General Götz Gliemeroth, developed a campaign plan with five lines of operation which included enhancing security through patrolling activities, supporting the security sector reform activities where possible (such as assisting the Japanese DDR program and sending their legal advisor out to help the Italian judicial reform efforts), supporting the development activities of NGOs, actively maintaining positive public perception and public support, and establishing long-term ISAF operating capability (by building a permanent headquarters building) since the mission was seen as no-fail for NATO. It also considered liaison a key task and it established constant communications with the Afghan government, the UN, the command headquarters of OEF (Combined Forces Command-Afghanistan, or CFC-A), the coalition contingent commanders, and international development agencies. ISAF also began consultation and negotiations with visiting groups of national representatives. International interest in participating in Afghanistan was high and the visiting delegations asked ISAF “Where might we go? Where [can we] do the most good?”¹⁸ The headquarters therefore had to quickly develop the capacity to integrate new contributions into the areas and missions they best suited. The ISAF staff elements created to do this coordination ultimately linked back into NATO’s force generation processes.

In the meantime, the interim Karzai government, with UN and U.S. support, had continued to ask that ISAF’s mandate be expanded and so on September 18th, after national political positions converged, the NAC tasked its military planners to develop options on expanding ISAF outside Kabul.¹⁹ The shift and convergence in political will was influenced by the fact that the environment was peaceful in large parts of Afghanistan. The expansion was not contentious since ISAF would only be continuing the stability operations it had

¹⁸ Colonel (retired) Phil Evans, U.S. Army.

¹⁹ “NATO considers role in Afghanistan,” *St. John’s Telegram (Newfoundland)*, September 19, 2003.

begun in the capital. The expansion decision was also influenced by alliance and domestic politics. According to a former political advisor to the U.S. Mission in NATO, the “allies realized it was in their interest as well as ours that we come back together” after the damaging split caused by Iraq. The allies’ perception of Afghanistan was that “all the fighting, the hot and heavy stuff, it’s over here in the east. OEF is there . . . we won’t have to worry about that” because the Americans are taking care of it. Domestically, it was easier for the allies “to do something in Afghanistan,” particularly, for those which had opposed the Iraq intervention. Politicians in France and Germany could not go back to their publics and say “All right, well, you’ve already invaded Iraq so we’ll go in there and help you out.” They wanted to heal the Alliance damage “as long as it wasn’t Iraq.”²⁰ On October 6th, NATO’s Secretary General informed the UN that NATO was ready to expand and later that month the UN Security Council extended the ISAF mandate to cover all of Afghanistan in UNSCR 1510.²¹ In December, the NAC authorized the SACEUR to start the expansion and ISAF’s first action was to assume responsibility for the PRT in Kunduz, which Germany had taken over from the U.S.²²

The initial ISAF expansion plan entailed little more than the assumption of responsibility for existing, and creation of new, PRTs, and it was very short on details. It was also a very slow, deliberate process that played out over three years (and as it was happening OEF was busy establishing PRTs; by 2005 it had 13 in the south and east). Each phase of the four-stage expansion began with an announcement by senior NATO officials, followed by ISAF operational action. In June 2004, at the Istanbul Summit, Alliance officials announced ISAF would take over the British PRT in Mazar-e-Sharif and establish three additional PRTs in the north (in Meymaneh, Feyzabad, and Pol-e-Khomri). Once they were stood up in October 2004, Stage 1, into the north, was considered complete. In February 2005, NATO announced ISAF would expand into the west. It took over the PRTs

²⁰ Sherwood McGinnis, U.S. State Department.

²¹ Michael Evans, “Nato to expand Afghanistan force,” *The Times (London)*, October 7, 2003; and United Nations Security Council, “Resolution 1510 (2003),” Adopted by the Security Council at its 4840th meeting, on 13 October 2003.

²² NATO, “ISAF’s mission in Afghanistan,” http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/topics_69366.htm.

in Herat and Farah in May and established two new ones in Chaghcharan and Qala-i-Naw in September. This completed Stage 2.²³

The actual ISAF presence on the ground, after these stages, was nine PRTs and two forward support bases (FSBs) in Mazar-e-Sharif and Herat which provided logistical support to the PRTs.²⁴ The presence was overlapped by OEF forces because by 2004, CFC-A had realized it needed to establish a permanent presence across the country; it could not rely on basing the bulk of its forces in Kabul, its environs, and a few forward operating bases and sending troops out for operations for discrete periods of time, particularly since it had introduced a new approach – COIN – in the fall of 2003. Therefore, in 2004 and 2005, various task forces subordinate to CJTF-76 were assigned geographic operational areas and as a consequence they established new commands that became known as Regional Command (RC)-South, RC-East, RC-West and RC-North.²⁵

Since the period 2003 to 2005 was “quiet,” the operational overlapping of OEF and ISAF was not considered a critical issue. More importantly, the low level of organized violence in the majority of the country, and the sense the conflict was over, did not lead to an unraveling of the ISAF coalition even though there was no significant security threat that could serve as a bonding agent. Instead, step by step the coalition grew larger (both in terms of the number of troops deployed and number of contributing nations), it assumed a larger geographic footprint, and it expanded its missions and activities. Coalition members recognized there was a massive need for development activities in the regions and they wanted to assist the Afghan government establish its legitimacy with the population. In the absence of faster, more comprehensive civilian development efforts, they needed to get involved to kick start activities. Their experience in the Balkans gave them confidence they could undertake this mission. They also assumed the areas would remain “permissive,” or calm and stable, particularly in the north and west, so the reconstruction and governance

²³ *ISAF Provincial Reconstruction Team (PRT) Handbook, Edition 4* (Public Intelligence, 2009), 94-95.

²⁴ “ISAF’s mission in Afghanistan.”

²⁵ Wright, *A Different Kind of War*, 278, 280, 294. CJTF-180 was renamed CJTF-76 in April 2004 when the new U.S. unit rotated into Afghanistan, see Appendix 2.

activities would be relatively simple to coordinate and oversee. Thus, it did not matter very much that the expansion plan was thin on details, especially since they did not think they would be deployed in the country very long.

The allied perceptions and assumptions reinforced national decisions (political will) to contribute to NATO's ISAF. The decisions were based on a variety of national interests that derived from domestic and alliance politics. Some nations, such as Canada and New Zealand, were involved for humanitarian reasons to assist a stricken nation.²⁶ For the United States, it was the right thing to do since Afghanistan had been abandoned after the Soviet-Afghan war.²⁷ Sweden decided it could not remain "neutral" in a security environment threatened by international terrorism, but because it would not involve itself in combat activity it volunteered to lead the multinational PRT in Mazar-e-Sharif.²⁸ Canada contributed one of the largest contingents and volunteered to lead the ISAF V rotation because it did not want to become involved in Iraq²⁹ (thus nations could have multiple reasons for contributing). Norway contributed and stayed due to loyalty to the United States and to NATO.³⁰ Spain contributed initially because it wanted to be taken seriously as a top tier member of the international community. Later it wanted to continue to be seen as a reliable ally despite Iraq. That is, Spain withdrew from Iraq after the Madrid bombing, but the new Socialist government of Prime Minister José Zapatero wanted to communicate it still valued NATO, so it increased its troop contribution to Afghanistan.³¹ Other countries

²⁶ Chris Alexander, *The Long Way Back: Afghanistan's Quest for Peace* (New York: HarperCollins Publishers, 2011), xxviii-xxix. Lieutenant Colonel Hugh McAslan, New Zealand Army (served as the commander of the military component of the New Zealand Provincial Reconstruction Team in Bamiyan, Regional Command-East, ISAF, Afghanistan, April-October 2011), interview with author at Carlisle Barracks, PA, April 18, 2013.

²⁷ "Ignoring Afghanistan in the 1980s, a blunder, says Gates," February 12, 2007, <http://www.afghanistannewscenter.com/news/2007/February/feb122007.html>.

²⁸ Ryan Hendrickson, "History: Sweden's partnership with NATO," *NATO Review* (July 2007), http://www.nato.int/docu/review/2007/Military_civilian-divide/EN/index.htm.

²⁹ General Rick Hillier, *A Soldier First: Bullets, Bureaucrats and the Politics of War* (Toronto: HarperCollins Publishers, 2009), 262-263.

³⁰ Colonel Ivar Omsted, Norwegian Army (served as Commander, Task Force Faryab and Provincial Reconstruction Team Faryab, Meymaneh, Regional Command-North, ISAF, Afghanistan, June 2009-January 2010), interview with author at Carlisle Barracks, PA, January 24, 2014.

³¹ Lieutenant Colonel Javier Marcos, Spanish Army (served as the commander of a Spanish helicopter unit, Herat, Regional Command-West, ISAF, Afghanistan, May-November 2010), interview with author at Carlisle Barracks, PA, January 30, 2014.

wanted to demonstrate their value in a complex global security environment as new or aspiring Alliance members. Small nations like Lithuania and Croatia not only wanted to be members of a security organization that shared their values and interests, but also because joining was seen as a form of protection against external threats.³² For Albania it was about more than just earning an invitation to join NATO. According to Albanian officers who served in Afghanistan, their country harbors a fierce loyalty toward the United States. They credit their current existence as a nation to U.S. support after World War II and as such “they will always be our allies . . . they will follow America anywhere, anytime, to do anything.”³³ In addition, there was a desire to repair the frayed relationships caused by the Iraq intervention and Afghanistan seemed a good vehicle to bring the allies back into harmony.³⁴ The allies reiterated at the 2004 Istanbul Summit they wanted to ensure the country did not slide back into being a sanctuary for international jihadism,³⁵ especially since al Qaeda and its affiliates continued attacks in Europe and around the world, such as: November 2003 Istanbul bombings (57 killed; 700 wounded); March 2004 Madrid bombings (191 killed, 1,500 wounded); and July 2005 London suicide bombings (56 killed, over 700 wounded). Numerous plots were also discovered and prevented in the UK, Belgium, Spain, Germany, France, and the Netherlands.³⁶ The international jihadist threat therefore remained real for the allies. The combination of confidence (from organizational capacity) and commitment (political will) led to a level of cohesion within ISAF.

The cohesion did not prevent ISAF from having an ad hoc character. During the first two expansion stages, the political and strategic level authorities issued very little

³² Lieutenant Colonel Mindaugas Steponavicius, Lithuanian Army; and Colonel Denis Tretinjak, Croatian Army (served as a Senior Mentor and Team Leader, Operational Mentoring and Liaison Team, Mazar-e-Sharif, Regional Command-North, ISAF, Afghanistan, February-August 2008), interview with author at Carlisle Barracks, PA, January 27, 2014.

³³ Lieutenant Colonel Timothy Davis, U.S. Army (supported CJTF Phoenix by deploying a mobile training team from the U.S. Army Armor Center, Fort Knox, KY to Pol-e-Charki to train an Afghan tank battalion, April-September 2003; also served as the commander of a U.S. Stryker battalion in Kandahar Province, Regional Command-South, ISAF, Afghanistan, March 2012-January 2013), interview with author at Carlisle Barracks, PA, April 11, 2014.

³⁴ Sherwood McGinnis, U.S. State Department.

³⁵ Gülner Aybet, “Towards a new transatlantic consensus,” *NATO Review* (August 2004), <http://www.nato.int/docu/review/2004/Interpreting-Istanbul/EN/index.htm>.

³⁶ Deborah Hanagan, “Militant Islam and the European Security and Defense Policy” (civilian research project, U.S. Army War College, 2008), 55-56.

concrete guidance to the ISAF commanders. According to General Rick Hillier, who commanded ISAF V between February and August 2004, JFC Brunssum did not provide a military strategy for the expansion and did not articulate what NATO was trying to achieve or how it would do it.³⁷ This left a lot of room for the commanders on the ground to figure out how to execute the mission, especially since PRTs were adapted to the needs and conditions of the regions in which they were located. General Hillier's criticism indicated he was uncomfortable with the light touch of the strategic civilian and military leaders in NATO however this attitude gave him and the later ISAF commanders a lot of autonomy which proved useful as the conflict changed and learning occurred. They had the latitude and the authority to adapt operations when they felt they needed to do so.

NATO supported ISAF operations as best it could and it was often less than perfect. For example, it had some difficulties initially in fielding necessary enabling capabilities. NATO leaders had trouble convincing members to contribute sufficient aviation assets (tactical airlift and close air support) and quick reaction forces to support the PRTs.³⁸ This resulted in wide diversity in the size, structure, and actions of the individual PRTs. The fact that NATO leaders such as the Secretary General and the SACEUR followed the expansion announcements with pleas for nations to volunteer to establish, lead, or contribute to new PRTs and to provide enabling capabilities³⁹ probably exacerbated the situation. It created the impression that NATO was constantly catching up with itself as it undertook and expanded ISAF.

The general idea in the expansion plan was to help the Afghan government establish its presence in the provinces by assisting local authorities with reconstruction and security. It was thought the ISAF PRTs would support and coordinate the work of humanitarian aid and development agencies, rather than doing the bulk of the reconstruction work

³⁷ Hillier, *A Soldier First*, 290.

³⁸ Nicholas Fiorenza, "NATO Seeks More Troops for ISAF in Afghanistan," *DefenseNews*, November 8, 2004.

³⁹ Ibid., and Judy Dempsey, "Nato focuses on Afghanistan's security," *Financial Times*, February 5, 2004.

themselves.⁴⁰ According to General Jean-Louis Py, who commanded the ISAF VI rotation, it did not work out that way, however, since development money was slow to manifest and major projects took time to culminate. Since expectations were very high, on the part of the international community and the Afghans, that development and reconstruction results would appear quickly, the PRTs got involved in quick impact projects and progressively became more directly involved in reconstruction and development activities,⁴¹ especially as the security situation worsened in 2006 and aid agencies withdrew from some rural areas. The increase in insurgent violence affected the next two stages of the ISAF expansion.

In December 2005, NATO announced ISAF would expand into the south.⁴² Not long afterwards, in February 2006, the Norwegian PRT in Meymaneh, in Faryab Province, a region that had hitherto been quite peaceful, was attacked. Given the way ISAF was structured in this northern region, there were no combat forces available to come to its aid, and the national caveats of nearby coalition nations prohibited them from participating in combat operations. Eventually British forces deployed to the area and saved the PRT.⁴³ The growing recognition that an insurgency was rising and the current form of the NATO footprint was woefully insufficient, led to adaptation and the implementation of a proposal that had been percolating at NATO since the fall of 2005 for ISAF to officially assume the lead role in all of the regions.⁴⁴

As a result, Germany officially assumed command of RC-North on June 1st, 2006.⁴⁵ The Stage 3 ISAF expansion into the south on July 31st entailed it taking over command of RC-South, all the battle groups in the region, and four PRTs.⁴⁶ Contributing nations also deployed additional forces into the region, bringing ISAF totals up to 15,000 troops from 37

⁴⁰ LTG Rick Hillier, "Great expectations."

⁴¹ "General Py: ISAF Commander," *NATO Review* (August 2004), <http://www.nato.int/docu/review/2004/Interpreting-Istanbul/EN/index/htm>.

⁴² *ISAF Provincial Reconstruction Team (PRT) Handbook*, 95.

⁴³ Paul Gallis, *NATO in Afghanistan: A Test of the Transatlantic Alliance* (Washington, DC: Congressional Research Service Report for Congress, October 23, 2007), 8.

⁴⁴ Lolita C. Baldor, "Rumsfeld Seeks NATO Role in Afghanistan," September 13, 2005, <http://www.afghanistannewscenter.com/news/2005/September/sep142005.html>.

⁴⁵ "German Peacekeepers Assume Command in Afghanistan," *Deutsche Welle*, June 1, 2006.

⁴⁶ *ISAF Provincial Reconstruction Team (PRT) Handbook*, 95.

nations.⁴⁷ Most notably, the nations deployed in the south imposed virtually no caveats on how their forces could operate.⁴⁸ The Stage 4 expansion into the east was similar. ISAF assumed command of RC-East and all of the forces in the region on October 5th, 2006.⁴⁹ Italy also assumed command of RC-West and ISAF created RC-Capital during the year.⁵⁰

During the first few years of NATO taking over ISAF and the command expanding operationally throughout the country (2003-2005) there were few forces fraying coalition cohesion because violence levels were low and insurgent activity disparate. This reinforced the allied perception the conflict was over and the assumption the environment would remain benign, and it contributed to the sense of confidence about the mission. Conducting stability operations through patrols and ANSF training and overseeing governance, reconstruction, and development activities was not something totally new due to the Balkans experience. However, despite the belief in the legitimacy of the mission and the multiple national reasons for joining (which aided the convergence of political will into the decision to take over ISAF and expand), nations were reluctant to commit substantial forces – the rationale for maintaining a light footprint was a useful excuse – which ultimately had significant negative consequences because it allowed a security vacuum to develop. The nature of the ISAF expansion also allowed the development of a complicated relationship with OEF and U.S. forces.

OEF Evolves and Expands

While ISAF was expanding, OEF was also adapting and changing. The adaptations included new organizational structures and new missions. OEF's expansion into reconstruction and training activities, as well as its continuing security operations, along with the requirement to coordinate closely with the Afghan government, the UN, coalition partners and ISAF, and governmental and non-governmental development organizations

⁴⁷ Mihai Carp, "Building Stability in Afghanistan," *NATO Review* (March 2006), <http://www.nato.int/docu/review/2006/Operation-Old-New/EN/index.htm>.

⁴⁸ "Hikmet Çetin: Our man in Kabul," *NATO Review* (June 2006), <http://www.nato.int/docu/review/2006/Invokation-Article-5/EN/index.htm>.

⁴⁹ *ISAF Provincial Reconstruction Team (PRT) Handbook*, 96.

⁵⁰ "International Security Assistance Force," ISAF Placemat, January 29, 2007, <http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natolive/107995.htm>.

was too much for the CJTF-180 commander to handle. Therefore, CENTCOM decided to create Combined Forces Command-Afghanistan (CFC-A) which stood up in October 2003. This was a theater strategic headquarters that concentrated on political-military affairs (it essentially mirrored the ISAF headquarters). In particular the new commander, Lieutenant General David Barno, concentrated on building a strong relationship with the Afghan government and harmonizing civilian and military efforts through close coordination with the U.S. Embassy and ISAF.⁵¹ The existing commands of CJTF-180 and OMC-A were subordinated to it (see Appendix 2). With the creation of CFC-A, OEF was no longer temporary or short-term. Lieutenant General Barno transitioned the command and mission to a long-term posture and as such it built permanent basing infrastructure.

More importantly, Lieutenant General Barno assessed that previous OEF efforts had been too focused on enemy forces. His longer term view, based on an overall objective that was similar to the ISAF goal, concluded that OEF needed to shift its focus to “rebuilding the physical and social infrastructure” of Afghanistan so that the people would support the nascent Afghan government and reject the Taliban and its associated groups. He therefore implemented a campaign plan, which his successor continued, that involved five lines of operation. The “Defeat Terrorism and Deny Sanctuary” line involved special forces counter-terrorism activities against al Qaeda and traditional COIN operations that involved combat operations against insurgents, negotiations with rival groups, and reconstruction. The “Enable Afghan Security Structure” line involved rebuilding and training the Afghan security forces (both army and police). The “Sustain Area Ownership” line involved creating regional commands and permanently deploying forces in them. The “Enable Reconstruction and Good Governance” line was undertaken by the PRTs, and the “Engage Regional States” line involved coordination with bordering nations. It was a very ambitious campaign plan that suffered from serious resourcing shortfalls. CFC-A never received enough combat forces to “hold” territory and secure the population in the provinces in the absence of sufficient Afghan security forces and it even had difficulty fully manning the

⁵¹ Wright, *A Different Kind of War*, 237, 242, 243.

headquarters. Coalition partners were slow to contribute officers to the multinational staff and the United States was reluctant to provide additional forces because it had shifted its attention to Iraq.⁵²

There were also major changes within OMC-A as its mission expanded. As noted in the previous chapter, CJTF Phoenix was created in June 2003 to execute the building of the ANA and this was a hugely ambitious multinational undertaking that involved the creation of a new Afghan Army from the ground up. The program was developed in consultation with Afghan leadership and involved basic training for enlisted soldiers (U.S. lead), officer training (France lead), and non-commissioned officer training (UK lead) at KMTC.⁵³ The troops were then equipped and formed into units. The ANA plan approved by the Karzai government in 2002 called for the activation of five regional Afghan Corps: 201st Corps in Kabul, 203rd Corps in Gardez, 205th Corps in Kandahar, 207th Corps in Herat, and 209th Corps in Mazar-e-Sharif.⁵⁴ To the extent possible, the Afghan Corps headquarters were located in proximity to OEF's regional commands. After Afghan battalions, called *kandaks*, were formed in KMTC, they were posted to the Afghans Corps and CJTF Phoenix continued their training through multinational ETTs. Rather than conducting individual training, the ETTs engaged in collective training of squads, platoons, and companies. They also mentored leaders at the battalion, company, and platoon level, as well as staff officers. In addition, they accompanied *kandaks* on operational missions as advisers.⁵⁵ ISAF got

⁵² Ibid., 243-247. Barno's campaign plan was based on a questionable assumption. He claimed he was comfortable with the troop levels he had because his approach was not about using coalition troops to physically secure Afghan communities. He believed that with COIN operations, reconstruction activities, intelligence gathering, and information operations the coalition could gain and maintain popular support. With the Afghan people 'on side' they would not support insurgent forces. The plan did not account for the complexity of the conflict, which included tribal, cultural, and criminal factors, or its evolving nature.

⁵³ Combat Studies Institute interview of General Karl Eikenberry, *Eyewitness to War Volume III*, 19, 27, 28, 46. Specialized training for combat support and combat service support elements, such as logistics and intelligence, was incorporated by 2004.

⁵⁴ The 201st Corps was activated first, in the fall of 2003, and received a full complement of battalions and brigades (10,000 troops) by mid 2004. In the latter half of 2004, the MOD activated the four other Corps and CJTF Phoenix started training their forces. By 2005, all of the Afghan Corps had sufficient troop strength to support the parliamentary election.

⁵⁵ Lieutenant Colonel Chris Mueller, U.S. Army (served in the DDR program, assisting with the cantonment of heavy weapons, April-October 2004, then as the leader of an ETT in Kandahar that

involved in the collective training effort in 2005 when the PRTs began training Afghan security forces, too.⁵⁶ It called the teams Operational Mentoring and Liaison Teams (OMLTs), not ETTs, and they were eventually embedded into Afghan units.

This building of the Afghan Corps process shared the ad hoc, or catching-up, character of ISAF. For example, the first *kandaks* for the 209th Corps began arriving at Mazar-e-Sharif in RC-North in February 2005, but they had no billets. Their permanent base was still in the process of being built, so the ETT had to find them temporary billets at a satellite camp while also coordinating the contract to build and open their base.⁵⁷

Besides training, OMC-A also had overall responsibility for overseeing and coordinating security sector reform activities, so this was an area that overlapped ISAF. One activity in particular was critical for long-term security: the collection and cantonment of heavy weapons and the demobilization of the militias. It was only through a successful DDR program and the building up of the ANA that the U.S. could stop the corrosive policy of relying on Afghan militias. OMC-A also had the mission to reform the Ministry of Defense (MOD) and create the General Staff. It did this primarily through a mentoring program that initially relied on U.S. soldiers and contractors. However, allies were also asked to assist OMC-A with the defense mentoring program.⁵⁸ Ministry mentoring was mirrored by ISAF when General Hillier agreed to a Karzai request to help the Afghans build “a functioning government structure.” Hillier established a Strategic Advisory Team that worked for Karzai and the Afghan government between 2004 and 2008. The Canadian military officers and civil servants who comprised the team were assigned within a variety of Afghan ministries and they advised various ministers on how to do strategic planning, they explained budgetary processes, and they educated Afghans on inter-governmental coordination

was embedded in an Afghan infantry kandak, November 2004-March 2005), interview with author in Carlisle, PA, May 1, 2014.

⁵⁶ Robert McMahon, “PRTs Spreading, Though Impact Remains Unclear,” *RFE/RL*, October 20, 2005.

⁵⁷ Combat Studies Institute interview of Major William Woodring, *Eyewitness to War Volume III*, 357-358.

⁵⁸ Combat Studies Institute interview of General Karl Eikenberry, *Eyewitness to War Volume III*, 27, 37, 42-43, 46.

processes.⁵⁹ As the next chapter will describe, these initial mentoring efforts were eventually expanded into a formal ministerial mentoring program and subsumed into NTM-A.

OMC-A expanded into police training in 2005. The German-led ANP development program was oriented on training traditional law enforcement methods and it was slow to produce sufficient trained police officers.⁶⁰ The German efforts were hampered by funding and personnel shortages.⁶¹ By December 2004, there were 33,000 police on duty to support a population of some 27 million Afghans in a country the size of France (the ANA numbered 18,000 at the time).⁶² As the insurgency heated up and violence levels increased, the country needed significantly more police forces with a more expanded set of skills so they could assist the ANA in protecting the population, but the German program was constrained by national caveats and could not meet this demand.⁶³ The coalition had unintentionally allowed a serious security gap to open and it needed to quickly catch-up the Afghan security forces to meet the challenge.

In late 2004, OMC-A was tasked to study the program. The ANA training program was considered both comprehensive and successful and Lieutenant General Barno wanted OMC-A to see if it could replicate the program for the ANP. After developing “a detailed plan for restructuring the ANP training program” and gaining the approval of the Germans, NATO, the UN, and the Afghan government, OMC-A was officially assigned the mission in July 2005. It was intended to support the German effort. As a result, OMC-A was renamed the Office of Security Cooperation-Afghanistan (OSC-A) and it stood up CJTF Police, which paralleled CJTF Phoenix. The next year, OSC-A was renamed the Combined Security

⁵⁹ Hillier, *A Soldier First*, 293-297. Also, David Bercuson and J.L. Granatstein with Nancy Pearson Mackie, *Lessons Learned? What Canada Should Learn from Afghanistan* (Calgary: Canadian Defence & Foreign Affairs Institute, 2011), 1, 6-8.

⁶⁰ Giustozzi, *Koran, Kalashnikov, and Laptop*, 174.

⁶¹ Wright, *A Different Kind of War*, 301.

⁶² Michael O’Hanlon and Adriana Lins de Albuquerque, *Afghanistan Index: Tracking Variables of Reconstruction & Security in Post-Taliban Afghanistan* (Washington DC: The Brookings Institution, February 23, 2005), 2. Population number from the CIA World Factbook, <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/af.html>.

⁶³ Colonel (retired) William Braun, U.S. Army (served as Director, CJ-7, Training, Education and Force Development/Force Integration, CSTC-A, Kabul, Afghanistan, June 2008-June 2009), interview with author at Carlisle Barracks, PA, January 8, 2013.

Transition Command-Afghanistan (CSTC-A).⁶⁴ For all intents and purposes, the United States became the lead nation for police training. It was also an embarrassing demonstration of the lack of allied will to commit sufficient resources to the effort and the unacknowledged need for U.S. leadership. With the increased American involvement came massive resources: between 2005 and 2008 the United States provided \$5.9 billion for the ANP program.⁶⁵

The reformed ANP training program was just as ambitious as the ANA program. It not only involved training the Afghan Uniformed Police (AUP), or the regular, local uniformed police, the Afghan National Civil Order Police (ANCOP), a gendarmerie-like elite force, and the Afghan Border Police (ABP), but also reforming the Ministry of Interior (MOI) through mentoring. The plan emphasized quality over quantity (since attrition and corruption were major problems) and included equipping, reforming recruitment methods, pay improvements, and the building of infrastructure (these included the Wardak Police Academy and regional training centers).⁶⁶ Like the ANA program, training continued after police officers were posted to their duty stations. CJTF Police created Police Mentoring Teams (PMT), which mirrored the ANA's ETTs.⁶⁷ ISAF also got involved, but it called the teams Police Operational Mentoring and Liaison Teams (POMLT).⁶⁸

In addition, the ANP program adapted over time, in response to changing conditions and other emerging challenges. As the insurgency heated up, the Taliban and associated groups increasingly targeted police officers and assaulted police facilities to undermine morale and recruitment efforts. By 2008, ANP deaths were triple ANA deaths. Furthermore,

⁶⁴ Wright, *A Different Kind of War*, 301-302. Part of the ANP problem was the fact untrained policemen were allowed into the force during the early years; both Germany and CSTC-A had the problem of demand outpacing their training capacity, so as an interim measure Afghans who never should have been inducted were. The coalition later tried to weed them out.

⁶⁵ "Policing in Afghanistan: Still Searching for a Strategy," *Crisis Group Asia Briefing No. 85* (December 18, 2008), 9.

⁶⁶ Wright, *A Different Kind of War*, 301-302. There were other, smaller, police elements: counter-narcotics police, a criminal investigation department, and counter-terrorism police. Other forces were added later, such as the Afghan Public Protection Force. The international community pays the salaries of the police through a funding pool called the Law and Order Trust Fund (LOTFA), "Policing in Afghanistan: Still Searching for a Strategy," 2.

⁶⁷ *Report on Progress toward Security and Stability in Afghanistan, January 2009* (Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Defense Report to Congress, 2009), 38, 44.

⁶⁸ McMahon, "PRTs Spreading, Though Impact Remains Unclear."

many local police were implicated in criminal activity and were perceived as corrupt by the public. To improve the capabilities of the AUP and overcome cultural conditions that encouraged corruption, CSTC-A implemented the Focused District Development (FDD) program in 2007.⁶⁹ This ambitious program aimed to reform police at the district level by pulling out the entire district police force for reconstitution, equipping, and a special eight week training program at the regional training centers. They were backfilled by ANCOP forces while they were absent. When they returned, they were assigned PMTs to continue their development.⁷⁰ In addition, judges and prosecutors in the districts were given special training and police infrastructure was repaired.⁷¹ By August 2008, 31 police districts had gone through FDD.⁷² Where it was implemented, the program was largely successful, but due to shortfalls in resources (money and trainers) it was not possible to implement it in all 365 districts. To maximize impact, CSTC-A concentrated on districts that had particular police problems or were located in strategic geographic locations that included key cities or key roads.⁷³

The countries and entities involved in police training also changed over time. Given the enduring challenges to the German training efforts, ISAF's SCR urged the EU to step in and help both police and judiciary efforts in November 2006.⁷⁴ NATO's Secretary General followed up the request in early 2007.⁷⁵ After consultation and consideration, the EU took over from Germany in mid-2007. The EU mission, EUPOL, attempted to tie together the non-U.S. efforts and coordinate activities with the UN and CSTC-A, but it was seriously under-staffed (there were only 184 people assigned to the mission by the end of 2008) and

⁶⁹ "Policing in Afghanistan: Still Searching for a Strategy," 3, 6, 12.

⁷⁰ *Report on Progress toward Security and Stability in Afghanistan, January 2009*, 44-45. According to Colonel (retired) William Braun, FDD was originally supposed to be a comprehensive, interagency program that not only trained the district police but also included a broad range of development projects in the district. However for a variety of reasons, the concept did not work and it devolved into a CSTC-A-only program.

⁷¹ *Ibid.*, 45; and *Germany's support for police reform in Afghanistan* (Berlin: Federal Foreign Office, Task Force Afghanistan-Pakistan/Federal Ministry of the Interior, March 2012), 19.

⁷² *Report on Progress toward Security and Stability in Afghanistan, January 2009*, 45.

⁷³ Colonel (retired) William Braun, U.S. Army.

⁷⁴ "NATO Urges EU to Do More in Afghanistan," *Reuters*, November 2, 2006.

⁷⁵ "EU to give green light to police mission in Afghanistan," *Agence France Presse*, February 10, 2007.

suffered logistical and funding problems. Furthermore, its personnel were dispersed into PRTs and the ISAF regional commands.⁷⁶ In the end, the police training and reform efforts were a complex, and in some cases disappointing, example of interlocking international institutions. CSTC-A, ISAF, the EU, and the UN were involved and a number of countries also had bilateral efforts, including the UK, U.S., Italy, Germany, the Netherlands, and Canada. The various efforts were poorly coordinated and the establishment of the International Policing Coordination Board, chaired by the Afghan Minister of Interior, did not solve the problem. Despite the EU contributions to police development and reform, the U.S. and CSTC-A efforts dwarfed everything else. Furthermore, CSTC-A's involvement raised concerns that Afghan police would become too militarized, particularly since it was increasingly used to help the ANA in fighting insurgent forces.⁷⁷ As the next chapter will show, this was later addressed by ISAF when NTM-A was established.

The final OEF changes involved command and control. The U.S. combat forces and PRTs in RC-South and RC-East transferred under ISAF, and thus foreign, command in 2006 in Stages 3 and 4 of the expansion. This was a first (since World War II) for the United States and the issue was discussed well in advance of the expansion.⁷⁸ Coordination for the remaining U.S. forces in OEF was also discussed in advance. The final arrangement was rather unorthodox. According to General David Richards, who commanded the ISAF IX rotation, May 2006-February 2007, coordination with OEF forces was made through his Deputy Commander for Security, a U.S. two star general. General Richards maintained he had no problems with the arrangement and that all U.S. forces, both those within ISAF and the remaining OEF elements, operated in line with his intent.⁷⁹ However, this was really just an informal arrangement based on good personal relations between U.S. and UK senior leaders. With the consequent operational reduction in OEF command responsibility in

⁷⁶ "Policing in Afghanistan: Still Searching for a Strategy," 9, 10.

⁷⁷ Ibid., 1, 5, 9, 10, 11, 16. The Interior Ministry itself prioritized COIN operations over actual policing, Giustozzi, *Koran, Kalashnikov, and Laptop*, 181.

⁷⁸ "US troops in Afghanistan could come under British control," *UK Telegraph*, October 3, 2005.

⁷⁹ Richard Cobbold, "RUSI Interview with General David Richard," *RUSI Journal*, Vol. 152, No. 2 (April 2007), 26.

theater, CENTCOM made the decision to de-activate CFC-A shortly after Lieutenant General Karl Eikenberry relinquished command in January 2007.⁸⁰ This left major military elements in Afghanistan which did not come under formal ISAF control. They officially belonged, and reported separately, to CENTCOM: CSTC-A with its expanding training mission; CJSOTF-A, with its special forces operations; and a task force that conducted detainee operations. Even after an American became the ISAF commander in 2007, the Deputy Commander for Security continued to be the coordination point between ISAF and OEF forces, until late 2008.⁸¹ These command and control changes further blended the original OEF and ISAF missions, but they also partially disconnected the security and reconstruction activities from the training efforts for almost three years.

The disjointed nature of military operations, combined with the continuing problem of insufficient forces, contributed to the coalitions' failure to secure the population and achieve in a durable manner the security objectives. On the other hand, the foundations laid by CSTC-A, particularly the building of basing and training infrastructure and the creation of the nascent ANSF forces, later proved useful to ISAF. As the next chapter will show, when the training mission was subsumed into ISAF in 2009, it had a foundation to build upon. In the meantime, ISAF was about to face its toughest test.

Fighting Heats Up

The other reason OEF and ISAF missions increasingly blurred together was because ISAF could not avoid combat operations as the insurgency heated up. In particular, contrary to the expectations reflected in the strategic guidance, Operation Plan 10302, NATO issued in December 2005 for the next stages of the expansion,⁸² the Canadian, British, and other coalition forces in RC-South could not just conduct reconstruction and development

⁸⁰ "Eikenberry ends tenure as head of CFC-Afghanistan," *Stars and Stripes*, January 23, 2007.

⁸¹ Ralf Beste, Konstantin von Hammerstein, and Alexander Szandar, "Shrinking Solidarity in Afghanistan? Debate Flares Anew about German Military Mission," *Spiegel Online*, May 28, 2007.

⁸² Carp, "Building stability in Afghanistan." The Plan stated ISAF's mission continued to be assisting the government with security, facilitating governance activities, and assisting development and reconstruction. It recognized the threat was greater in the south, but it addressed it only by giving ISAF forces "robust and flexible rules of engagement" so they could defend themselves in the event of attacks.

activities, because they found themselves in the middle of serious combat operations by the summer of 2006. That year was a major test for the Alliance and ISAF because the organized nature of insurgent operations shattered the assumptions of the allies. By the end of that year, the ISAF coalition could no longer maintain it was only there to do stabilization and peace operations. The pressure of intense combat operations could have been a destructive fraying force, but rather than falling apart, the forces in RC-South knuckled under and fought, and ISAF shifted its operational approach, even as forces remained thin.

As previously mentioned, the insurgent coalition had a strategy that it began to implement in 2002. The core Taliban leadership that had escaped in 2001 did not accept that they had been defeated and they did not accept the new Afghan government. They believed it was their religious duty to continue fighting. They primarily spent 2002 re-organizing, resuscitating networks, recruiting, and establishing training camps and bases in Pakistan. By 2003, Phase I had begun: infiltration into the east, southeast, and southern areas of Afghanistan. Small teams began recruiting local fighters and they assessed which villages were receptive to the insurgents. If necessary, they used hostile methods to gain influence over local communities: threats, night letters, or assassination of anyone who cooperated with the government (police, doctors, teachers, judges, clerics, government officials, and NGOs).⁸³ There were also sporadic attacks, primarily rockets and mortar fire, on coalition forces in the south and east.⁸⁴

By 2004, Phase II had begun which included consolidation of base areas in Afghanistan, the creation of authority structures in safe areas, and small scale attacks.⁸⁵ Insurgent consolidation efforts were aided by the light footprint of coalition and Afghan security forces; there was no one to stop them. They were also aided by the institutional weakness of the Karzai government which had a minimal presence outside Kabul (and some Taliban recruitment was the result of the predations of government officials), the autonomy of the provincial governors (some of whom sided with the insurgents in the context of local

⁸³ Giustozzi, *Koran, Kalashnikov, and Laptop*, 11, 37, 99-103.

⁸⁴ Wright, *A Different Kind of War*, 239, 251.

⁸⁵ Giustozzi, *Koran, Kalashnikov, and Laptop*, 99.

power struggles), and the complex networks of criminal activity and corruption (for example, some Afghans joined the Taliban as a response to poppy eradication because they had no livelihood alternatives).⁸⁶ The Taliban and its associates were experts at capitalizing on and manipulating the cultural, economic, and political conditions in the provinces which helped facilitate their return.⁸⁷ However, they were more successful in some areas than others in consolidating their presence. In the east, the insurgents operated freely in Kunar, Nuristan, and the north of Laghman. In the southeast, they established a presence in Ghazni and parts of Paktika and Paktia. They were most successful in the south. Most of Zabul came under insurgent control by 2004. Much of the countryside in Helmand was under de facto Taliban control by 2006, and insurgents penetrated into Kandahar in 2006 and Uruzgan in 2007.⁸⁸

With the consolidations, insurgent tactics changed. In 2004, attacks against coalition FOBs increased to almost daily. They involved not only rockets, mortar fire, and snipers, but also assaults and ambushes by small groups of insurgents. Attacks against Afghan security forces, Afghan officials, and aid workers also continued and they were not confined to the eastern-southern border region. The insurgents also began kidnappings and they used suicide bombers and improvised explosive devices (IEDs) more frequently. They also attacked reconstruction projects. By 2005, there were approximately 50 attacks a month against coalition and Afghan security forces, as well as infrastructure.⁸⁹

By late 2005, the insurgent coalition included ideologically motivated “hard core” jihadists, local recruits who joined for a wide variety of reasons (such as local power struggles, resentment at coalition heavy-handedness and collateral damage, need for money,

⁸⁶ Ibid., 53-62.

⁸⁷ Mike Martin makes a persuasive argument that the Taliban themselves were manipulated in Helmand. He argues that for about the last 30 years most of the violence in Helmand has been due to a civil war among a kaleidoscope of changing factions which involve tribes, clans, and political and religious power centers. Both the international coalition and the insurgents stepped into the middle of it after 2001. Both sides were used by the Helmandi factions to advance and protect their private interests. Mike Martin, *An Intimate War: An Oral History of the Helmand Conflict, 1978-2012* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2014), 3-6, 112, 151, 155, 158.

⁸⁸ Giustozzi, *Koran, Kalashnikov, and Laptop*, 52, 55, 56, 60, 61, 64.

⁸⁹ Wright, *A Different Kind of War*, 250, 277, 281-282.

etc.), a small number of mercenaries, and the Haqqani and Hekmatyr groups. The coalition was so confident of its strength in the south by 2006 that it moved into Phase III, large coordinated offensives.⁹⁰ The attacks were given religious justification by Mullah Omar's Taliban which issued a *fatwa* in 2005 that ordered the death of all infidels and others who supported the Afghan government.⁹¹

Between March and July, the insurgents launched a series of attacks against the Canadians in Kandahar and then massed in Pashmul, about 20 kilometers from Kandahar City, for what appeared to be an imminent major attack in August.⁹² The British also found themselves in serious, constant combat operations as soon as they deployed into northern Helmand province in the summer.⁹³ The attacks had multiple objectives. Antonio Giustozzi assessed the insurgents were so confident of their strength they actually thought they could launch a final set of offensives and win the war. This did not turn out to be the case because, unexpectedly for the insurgents, ISAF fought back and inflicted hundreds of casualties.⁹⁴ However, the insurgents were also well aware of the ISAF expansion phases and there was evidence the insurgent attacks were to test ISAF resolve. Taliban propagandists explicitly stated they wanted to discourage ISAF members from deploying troops in the south.⁹⁵ Failing that, they hoped to force the European troops to withdraw because they believed they were weak and would "run away" if they were struck hard.⁹⁶ In fact, ISAF intelligence sources intercepted message traffic in December 2005 in which Taliban leaders talked "about targeting the Dutch and other NATO countries to try to get them to retreat, as the Spaniards did out of Iraq."⁹⁷ The insurgents were also initially supremely confident of their abilities. One Taliban spokesman declared, "We are here to destroy the British."⁹⁸

⁹⁰ Giustozzi, *Koran, Kalashnikov, and Laptop*, 40-43, 91, 97, 123-124.

⁹¹ Isby, *Afghanistan*, 16.

⁹² Giustozzi, *Koran, Kalashnikov, and Laptop*, 124-125.

⁹³ Author interview at Carlisle Barracks, PA with Officer F (who served in combat units in Helmand Province, Regional Command-South, ISAF, Afghanistan), January 16, 2014. Also, Martin, *An Intimate War*, 160-165.

⁹⁴ Giustozzi, *Koran, Kalashnikov, and Laptop*, 99, 123, 125-126.

⁹⁵ "Hikmet Çetin: Our man in Kabul."

⁹⁶ "German Peacekeepers Assume Command in Afghanistan."

⁹⁷ Colonel Doug Mastriano, U.S. Army (served in the HQ, ISAF Joint Intelligence Center (JIC), Kabul, Afghanistan, between 2006 and 2008; his positions included working as an analyst, as the

It was clear for ISAF, as soon as it expanded into the south in 2006, that its original plan to conduct reconstruction, development, and governance activities, primarily with PRTs,⁹⁹ was insufficient. It had a full blown, well-established insurgency on its hands and its military footprint was too light. The previous concerns about creating dependency and being perceived as an occupation force were irrelevant, especially since the Afghan government and security forces could not fill the gap. In addition, the efforts by Pakistan to clear its tribal areas of militants failed in the years before 2008. Initially it relied on the poorly trained and equipped Frontier Corps, a locally raised paramilitary force in the FATA, but even after it began sending large numbers of Army troops into the autonomous provinces in 2005, they suffered embarrassing defeats and heavy casualties at the hands of the insurgents. This led to a series of peace agreements that ultimately failed in 2007 when Pakistani insurgent groups launched a widespread rebellion. Pakistan also allegedly responded quickly to U.S. demands to seal the border after 9/11. It established some 1,000 border posts along its 2,500 kilometer border with Afghanistan, but this was an impossible task given the extreme nature of the terrain: high mountains and deep ravines that could not be visually policed. The Pakistani military forces were further seriously hampered by their lack of ground and air mobility assets (4-wheel drive vehicles and helicopters).¹⁰⁰ The insurgent coalition's sanctuary in Pakistan was therefore secure for years after 2001 and guaranteed the next phase of the conflict.

The massing of insurgent forces in Pashmul was the precipitating agent for NATO's first conventional land battle in its history.¹⁰¹ According to General Richards, *Operation Medusa* was "a Second World War-style battle for Kandahar."¹⁰² Over the course of two

head of the assessments department, and as the Director of the JIC), interview with author at Carlisle Barracks, PA, April 3, 2013.

⁹⁸ Martin, *An Intimate War*, 164.

⁹⁹ "Afghanistan: NATO Troops Apply 'Robust' New Rules of Engagement," *RFE/RL*, February 8, 2006.

¹⁰⁰ Shuja Nawaz, *Learning by Doing: The Pakistan Army's Experience with Counterinsurgency* (Washington, DC: Atlantic Council, 2011), 3, 6-8, 10, 11, 14, 15.

¹⁰¹ Cobbold, "RUSI Interview with General David Richards," 24-25.

¹⁰² General Sir David Richards, "The Art of Command in the Twenty-First Century: Reflections on Three Commands," in Julian Lindley-French and Yves Boyer, eds., *The Oxford Handbook of War* (Oxford: University Press, 2012), 353.

weeks, 1-14 September 2006, Canadian, U.S., and Afghan combat forces, who were assisted by British, Danish, Dutch, and French close air, artillery, and other support, assaulted Taliban forces who had established themselves in fortified defensive positions.¹⁰³ The operation was tactically successful. Hundreds of insurgents were killed and the Taliban did not launch any further major operations that year.¹⁰⁴ However, it was not a glittering example of coalition warfare because requests before the operation by the RC-South commander, Brigadier General David Fraser, for combat troops from the European allies were refused. He stated in frustration, “We found out what NATO could not do. We simply couldn’t get everyone we needed . . . the Germans wouldn’t come down here; the French company weren’t allowed to come down here; and I couldn’t get the Italians . . .” He added that many of the enablers he requested, such as intelligence and aviation support, came with restrictions due to national caveats.¹⁰⁵ Strategically, the operation was a draw because even though ISAF did not have sufficient forces to consolidate security and ensure the Taliban did not come back to the area later, the battle itself was a significant psychological victory for the coalition. It demonstrated to the Afghans they could trust ISAF’s capabilities and it made the Taliban take ISAF seriously.¹⁰⁶

Due to the changed character of the conflict and allied recognition that the war was not over, ISAF adapted. It instituted counter-insurgency operations under General Richards during ISAF IX. ISAF was essentially forced into combat operations by the large, coordinated insurgent attacks. To further complicate matters, conditions varied widely across the provinces. As a consequence, contributing nations implemented different versions of COIN.

For example, U.S. forces in RC-East applied a “clear, hold, build, and engage” approach in the Korengal Valley in the spring of 2006. The approach relied on the

¹⁰³ This was not an ISAF-only operation; some of the U.S. special forces involved were from CFC-A. Ronald E. Neumann, *The Other War: Winning and Losing in Afghanistan* (Washington, DC: Potomac Books, 2009), 114. Also, Colonel Bernd Horn, *No Lack of Courage: Operation Medusa, Afghanistan* (Toronto: Dundurn Press, 2010), 40-41, 54-58, 72-73, 89, 93-110.

¹⁰⁴ Giustozzi, *Koran, Kalashnikov, and Laptop*, 126.

¹⁰⁵ Horn, *No Lack of Courage*, 45-46.

¹⁰⁶ Richards, “The Art of Command in the Twenty-First Century,” 353.

construction of combat outposts and inserting ANA and ANP forces into them. Afghan security forces, with U.S. support, were expected to underpin subsequent development and governance activities. The approach was repeated in several other operations later in the year.¹⁰⁷ The Dutch deployed into Uruzgan in August 2006 expecting the same kind of “welcome” the Canadians had received in Kandahar. However, they entered and operated in the province in a very different way. They were much more cautious. They did not build fortified combat outposts; instead they built “multi-functional qalas” which were Pashtun-inspired traditional houses with a guest room for visitors. They also emphasized talking and negotiation – with local residents, with local government, and with the Taliban. They literally tried to come in and operate without fighting. By the time the first rotation of Dutch troops departed the region, they had coordinated the building of roads, bridges, schools and clinics, and they had engaged in no combat actions. Over the course of four months, they encountered only 18 roadside bombs and seven ambushes, and no soldiers were killed in action.¹⁰⁸ In contrast, the British and Canadians each suffered 36 soldier fatalities that year which were significant increases over the previous years.¹⁰⁹

It must be noted that COIN is not a simple approach. Some coalition actions that made sense from a governance perspective actually created more conflict. For example, the British took seriously the problem of corrupt provincial leaders and the corrosive effect they had on the population. However their successful pressuring of the Afghan government to remove a powerful “warlord,” Sher Mohammed, from the Helmand provincial governorship in December 2005 because he was deeply involved in narcotics trafficking had seriously negative consequences over the course of the next year. Sher Mohammed resented being removed from a lucrative power position and even though he became a senator in Kabul he

¹⁰⁷ Colonel Michael A. Coss, “Operation Mountain Lion: CJTF-76 in Afghanistan, Spring 2006,” *Military Review* (January-February 2008): 22-29.

¹⁰⁸ Graeme Smith, “Doing it the Dutch way in Afghanistan,” *Globe and Mail*, December 2, 2006.

¹⁰⁹ British fatalities 2002-2005 was five and Canadian fatalities 2002-2005 was eight. Jason Campbell and Jeremy Shapiro, *Afghanistan Index: Tracking Variables of Reconstruction & Security in Post-9/11 Afghanistan* (Washington, DC: The Brookings Institution, September 30, 2008), 7.

had lost face at the hands of foreigners.¹¹⁰ He therefore played both sides in 2006. He claimed allegiance to Karzai but he also ordered his militia to fight with the Taliban coalition against the British.¹¹¹ Thus a political action directly contributed to the increase in violence in Helmand as the British arrived.

General Richards understood that the military operations were insufficient in the long-run. Short term tactical military successes had to be followed up by governance, reconstruction, and development activities.¹¹² He had wide latitude to adjust ISAF's operational approach and he experimented with various mechanisms to ensure a more effective comprehensive approach; under his command ISAF seemed to demonstrate it was a multinational operational force trying to learn and adapt. He created an international civilian think tank on his staff to encourage broad and creative thinking. He made an overt effort to include civilian advisors into planning and decision efforts to ensure ISAF did not default into a "military solution" mode. More importantly, his command identified that one of their most serious challenges was the mismatch between the development aspirations stated in the *Afghanistan National Development Strategy* (ANDS) and local capacity. There was no process to align intent and action or to ensure "the right project happens in the right place and without unnecessary delay."¹¹³ To correct this deficiency, ISAF, with the support of President Karzai, created the Policy Action Group (PAG) which included the president, key Afghan ministers (security, foreign affairs, finance, rural development, and education), and all the key international players (EU, NATO/ISAF, OEF, UN, World Bank, relevant ambassadors, and development agencies). This executive group made decisions on where to focus efforts and spending. The decisions were translated into actions in Afghan Development Zones (ADZ). This was essentially an "ink-spot" approach that concentrated reconstruction, development, and governance efforts in secure but strategically important

¹¹⁰ Emile Simpson, *War from the Ground Up: Twenty-First-Century Combat as Politics* (Oxford: University Press, 2013), 44-45.

¹¹¹ Martin, *An Intimate War*, 153-155.

¹¹² David Richards, "NATO in Afghanistan: Transformation on the Front Line," *RUSI Journal*, Vol. 151, No. 4 (August 2006): 11-12.

¹¹³ Greg Mills, *From Africa to Afghanistan: With Richards and NATO to Kabul* (Johannesburg: Wits University Press, 2007), xx, 28-29.

areas that were small to begin with but could be expanded.¹¹⁴ The initiative ran out of steam when General Richards rotated out of command, but a version of his initiative was resuscitated under General Stanley McChrystal when he assumed command of ISAF in 2009. This was an inherent deficiency of the constant ISAF command rotations. Learning could be lost and initiatives die since each new commander had different priorities.

The unexpected combat challenges of 2006 did not result in an unraveling of the coalition. All 26 NATO members remained in ISAF, along with 11 partners. Surprisingly, cohesion endured, despite bitter recriminations among the contributing nations. For example, British and Canadian political leaders severely criticized the restrictions of other countries (Germany, France, Italy, and Spain) that kept their troops away from the more dangerous south.¹¹⁵ There were also bitter debates within countries: Romano Prodi's coalition government in Italy was repeatedly challenged by radical leftists who demanded the country pull its troops out of Afghanistan. It maintained its commitment only by initiating a vote of confidence.¹¹⁶ The primary strategic driver holding the coalition together was fear of the consequences of failure. NATO leaders acknowledged the Alliance's credibility was on the line in Afghanistan and they stated so explicitly at the Riga Summit in November.¹¹⁷ ISAF could not afford to be defeated by the insurgent coalition because of the repercussions such a major operational failure would have on the Alliance as a whole. This was the main cohesive glue that sustained political will and held the coalition together in 2006. As such, it generated repeated requests for more troops by NATO's leaders and the ISAF commander.¹¹⁸ Some countries refused, such as Turkey,¹¹⁹ but others responded

¹¹⁴ Richards, "NATO in Afghanistan," 12 and Richards, "The Art of Command in the Twenty-First Century," 354-355.

¹¹⁵ Gloria Galloway, "Canada slams NATO's Afghan role," *Globe and Mail*, October 10, 2006 and Michael Thurston, "Blair to press NATO allies over Afghanistan," *Agence France Presse*, November 27, 2006.

¹¹⁶ "NATO asks Italy for more troops for Afghanistan," *Agence France Presse*, June 10, 2006; Massimiliano Di Gorgia, "Italy agrees to keep troops in Afghanistan," *Reuters*, June 30, 2006; and Kent Harris, "Italian forces to remain in Afghanistan – for now," *Stars and Stripes*, July 29, 2006.

¹¹⁷ Caren Bohan and Marcin Grajewski, "NATO leaders commit to Afghanistan for long haul," *Reuters*, November 29, 2006.

¹¹⁸ "NATO says fewer Taliban attacks in Afghan south," *Reuters*, October 11, 2006 and Lorna Cook, "NATO chief lashes allies over Afghan troop commitments," *Agence France Presse*, November 28, 2006.

quickly and agreed to send more troops: Bulgaria, Canada, Croatia, Czech Republic, Denmark, Macedonia, Poland, Romania, and Spain.¹²⁰ Latvia agreed to increase its contributions to ISAF because it took its collective security responsibilities seriously; it did not want to be a “passive consumer of security” and so this small Baltic state stretched itself to participate in the Balkans, in Afghanistan, and Iraq.¹²¹ Furthermore, Alliance members gave their permission for ISAF to conduct combat operations,¹²² and after repeated complaints about restrictive national caveats, there was agreement on loosening them. France, Germany, and Italy agreed to send troops to other regions in emergencies at Riga.¹²³ Thus, the Alliance’s organizational capacity to adapt to the changed conditions in Afghanistan at the strategic and operational levels continued, although it was painful and major disagreements still endured. In 2005, the United States had proposed that NATO should “eventually take command of the entire Afghan mission” and it maintained this preference for combining NATO-led and U.S.-led forces into 2006. However, France, Germany, and Spain opposed the idea because they wanted to retain the distinction between ISAF (peacekeeping) and OEF (offensive combat).¹²⁴ Over time, the distinction lost its meaning, paving the way for a full merging in 2009 and 2010.

The maintenance of cohesion and willingness to fight (by some) meant the Taliban’s large scale attacks were defeated in 2006 by relatively small NATO forces using *a lot* of direct and indirect firepower. To maintain the gains, General Richards recommended troop levels be increased going into 2007 so that the coalition would be ready for further

¹¹⁹ Suleyman Kurt, “Ankara Rejects NATO Request to Move Beyond Kabul,” *zaman.com*, October 26, 2006.

¹²⁰ “Suicide bombers won’t stop us in Afghanistan: NATO chief,” *Agence France Presse*, October 19, 2006; Bohan and Grajewski, “NATO leaders commit to Afghanistan for long haul;” and “New Croatian contingent to join ISAF mission in Afghanistan,” *International News Network, Pakistan*, January 3, 2007.

¹²¹ Vaira Vīķe-Freiberga, “Reflecting in Riga,” *NATO Review* (October 2006), http://www.nato.int/docu/review/2006/Road_Riga/EN/index.htm.

¹²² Fisnik Abrashi, “NATO takes over in southern Afghanistan,” July 30, 2006, <http://www.afghanistannewscenter.com/news/2006/july/jul302006.html>.

¹²³ Bohan and Grajewski, “NATO leaders commit to Afghanistan for long haul.”

¹²⁴ Will Dunham, “US urges NATO allies to drop Afghan mission limits,” *Reuters*, September 13, 2005; “France says opposes combining forces in Afghanistan,” *Reuters*, October 4, 2005; and Demetri Sevastopulo, Peter Spiegel, and Rachel Morarjee, “Nato to send 6,000 troops to southern Afghanistan despite surge in violence,” *Financial Times*, February 10, 2006.

Taliban attacks.¹²⁵ However, the insurgent coalition shifted tactics in 2007-2008. It no longer engaged in large, organized attacks by armed groups (so the much anticipated spring offensives never happened). Instead it greatly increased the use of IEDs, suicide bombings, ambushes, and assassinations¹²⁶ (see Figure 1 below). While most of the violence still occurred in the south and east, there were more frequent attacks in Kabul and the north and west.¹²⁷ The Taliban coalition also focused more on soft targets such as pro-government civilians and construction projects throughout the country. There were reportedly more

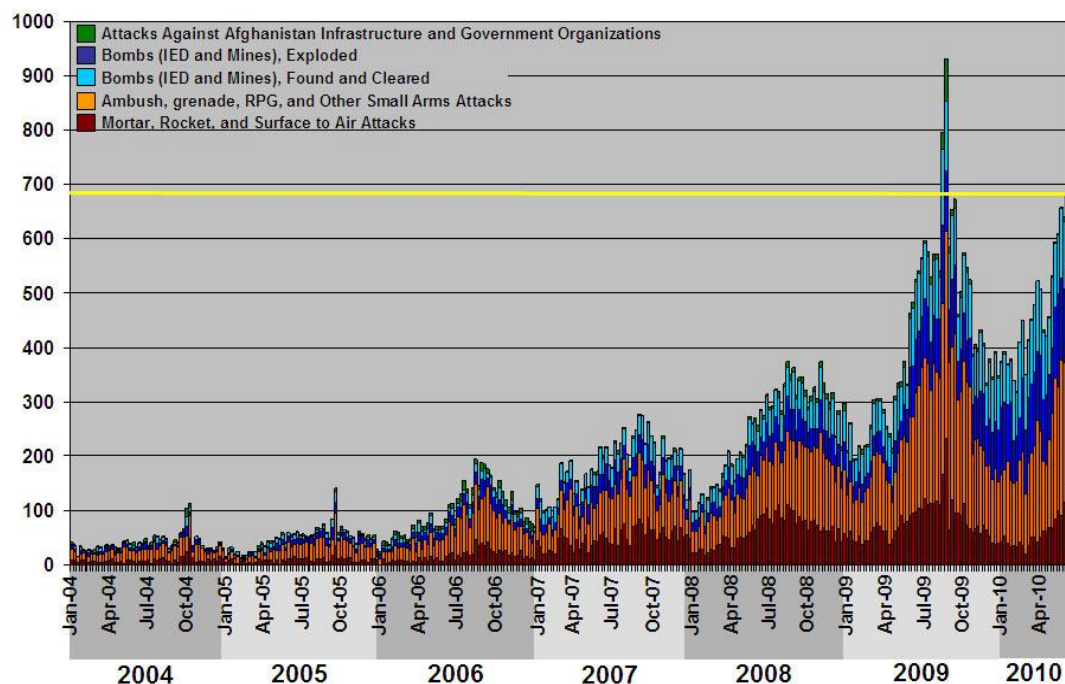


Figure 1: Number of Insurgent Attacks and Type by Week, January 2004-July 2010 (source: Afghanistan Index: Tracking Variables of Reconstruction & Security in Post-9/11 Afghanistan, November 11, 2010).

attacks against ISAF and the ANSF. This, however, was attributed to the fact that NATO and Afghan forces were increasingly operating in contested areas across the country as troop levels increased.¹²⁸ The increasing violence in 2007-2008 was reflected in the number of fatalities, with Afghan civilians bearing the brunt: more than 3,000 killed, with the vast

¹²⁵ "NATO will need more troops next year in Afghanistan," *Agence France Presse*, December 7, 2006.

¹²⁶ Isby, *Afghanistan*, 164-166.

¹²⁷ Gentilini, *Afghan Lessons*, 34-35.

¹²⁸ *Report on Progress toward Security and Stability in Afghanistan*, January 2009, 31.

majority caused by the Taliban.¹²⁹ Among the military forces, the international coalition lost 464 troops, the ANA lost 505, and the ANP lost 1,215.¹³⁰ ISAF's resolve, therefore, continued to be tested.

As violence in Afghanistan increased, terrorist attacks around the world continued, such as: April 2007 suicide bombings in Algeria (33 killed, 222 wounded); and June 2007 attempted suicide bombings in Glasgow (airport damage but no fatalities).¹³¹ In a twist of fate, the response of the Pakistani government to increasing Islamist militancy actually created more conflict in Pakistan which affected the war in Afghanistan. Militants started using the Red Mosque (*Lal Masjid*) in Islamabad as a base to launch attacks against local infidel activities in January 2007. After failing to negotiate a peaceful surrender, the government ordered the Pakistani Army to assault it in July. The action led to a wave of outrage and the formation of the Pakistani Taliban, the Tehrik-i-Taliban-i-Pakistan (TTP), who allied with the Afghan Taliban and al Qaeda. They, along with an additional affiliated group, the Tehrik-e-Nifaz-e-Shariat-e-Mohammedi (TNSM), revolted in the autonomous provinces of the FATA and North West Frontier Province (NWFP).¹³² All previous peace agreements with the insurgents were null and void. As a consequence, the Army launched a counter-offensive in November. Given the extensive reach of the insurgent groups and their threat to the Pakistani state, the Army shifted to counter-insurgency operations in 2008 and it progressively ramped up the scale of operations.¹³³

Pakistani military actions were coordinated with the coalitions in Afghanistan. Both the OEF and ISAF coalitions understood a regional approach was necessary and they created new organizational elements and new procedures to develop new relationships and coordinate activities on the two sides of the Afghan-Pakistan border. When Lieutenant General Barno assumed command of CFC-A in October 2003, he established the Tripartite

¹²⁹ Campbell and Shapiro, *Afghanistan Index*, 4.

¹³⁰ *Report on Progress toward Security and Stability in Afghanistan, January 2009*, 32.

¹³¹ The White House, "Fact Sheet: Combating Terrorism Worldwide," August 6, 2007, <http://georgewebush-whitehouse.archive.gov/infocus/>.

¹³² Anatol Lieven, *Pakistan: A Hard Country* (New York: PublicAffairs, 2011), 416-418, 466-467.

¹³³ Nawaz, *Learning by Doing*, 1, 7-11.

Commission. It was originally a standing committee for senior leaders from OEF and the Afghan and Pakistani militaries to meet every two months. Meetings rotated between the two countries. While primarily a strategic level forum to build relationships, trust, and confidence, particularly between the Afghans and Pakistanis, it was also a means for Pakistan and OEF/Afghanistan to brief upcoming operations and otherwise to coordinate military activities. The Commission also included three standing sub-committees for counter-IED, border security, and intelligence sharing which met monthly. These sub-forums concentrated on tactical and operational coordination.¹³⁴ As ISAF prepared to expand into the south and east, it was accorded observer status at the 16th meeting of the Tripartite Commission in April 2006.¹³⁵ It became a full member of the Commission in June¹³⁶ and then stepped into the lead international coalition role when CFC-A de-activated in early 2007.¹³⁷ The regional communication and coordination became more critical as the insurgencies became more virulent on both sides of the border. Trilateral cooperation became even closer when ISAF, Afghan, and Pakistani forces established a Joint Intelligence and Operations Cell in Kabul in 2007,¹³⁸ and then opened jointly-manned border coordination centers at seven strategic locations, to include the Torkham Gate, an important crossing point through the Khyber Pass, in 2008.¹³⁹ At the operational level, commanders understood they had to work together if they were to defeat the insurgencies. At one point, during Lieutenant General Eikenberry's command of CFC-A he implicitly acknowledged the importance of the sanctuaries when he stated Pakistan was the key "because the war will be won or lost there."¹⁴⁰ Given the fact the Taliban coalition was never definitively defeated during this period, violence increased, and counter-insurgency as

¹³⁴ Colonel Robert Hamilton, U.S. Army (served as the Chief, Regional Engagement, CFC-A, OEF, Kabul, Afghanistan, July 2005-June 2006, and was responsible for coordinating the meetings of the Tripartite Commission), interview with author at Carlisle Barracks, PA, April 2, 2013.

¹³⁵ "Afghanistan-Pak-US joint military exercises," *Times of India*, April 21, 2006.

¹³⁶ "Pakistan, Afghanistan, U.S., NATO review plans of NATO-ISAF expansion," *People's Daily Online*, June 7, 2006.

¹³⁷ "Interview: General Ray Henault, Chairman of the Military Committee," *NATO Review* (January 2007), http://www.nato.int/docu/review/2007/Reviewing_Riga/EN/index.htm.

¹³⁸ "Afghan, Pakistan, NATO intelligence hub to open this month," *Khaleej Times*, January 17, 2007.

¹³⁹ James Phillips and Lisa Curtis, "The War in Afghanistan: More Help Needed," April 17, 2008, <http://www.heritage.org/Research/NationalSecurity/bg2124.cfm>.

¹⁴⁰ Colonel Robert Hamilton, U.S. Army.

an operational approach, as well as the comprehensive approach, could not succeed due to lack of resources, it can be argued the conflict reached a stalemate by 2008. Neither side was winning.

Despite the challenges and difficulty of the fighting between 2006 and 2008, the ISAF coalition did not fracture. Cohesion endured as no contributing nation pulled out, and in fact the coalition increased to 40 nations by early 2008. This was a critical period, particularly for allies who had joined believing they would only be doing reconstruction and stability operations. A number of them found they had to fight, even if their domestic populations (such as Canada, Germany, Italy, and Netherlands) were not supportive of the mission in Afghanistan.¹⁴¹ Cohesion endured for political reasons related to alliance and domestic politics. Too much had been invested for NATO to allow failure or for ISAF to withdraw in the near term. While British leaders like Defense Secretary Des Browne and General Richards called it a noble cause and that Afghans deserved the international community's help after all they had been through since the 1980s,¹⁴² one of the officers interviewed articulated in more concrete terms the reasons for Britain's continuing involvement and its increase in forces from about 3,000 in 2006 to 9,500 by early 2010. He said, "NATO must be seen to have delivered success" in Afghanistan because the Alliance's viability is "vital national interest" for the UK. NATO is "really critical for the future because it offers you a credible force package and headquarters . . . a deployable capability that can do stuff on behalf of the UN . . . and it's important." He added, "Britain wishes to be a global player . . . [but] we don't have the resources" to do it alone. A viable multinational organization is therefore critical. He further described a very particular reason for trying to achieve a British success in Afghanistan. He said, "We are adamant to demonstrate to the Americans that we are worth . . . we can be trusted . . . We lost a little bit of credibility in Iraq" and so the government had "a very strong desire to change that

¹⁴¹ "No rush for the exit, yet: NATO in Afghanistan," *The Economist*, July 14, 2007; and Yves Clarisse, "L'Otan répond en partie aux demandes US sur l'Afghanistan," *Le Monde*, October 24, 2007.

¹⁴² Cobbold, "RUSI Interview with General David Richards," 32.

[negative American] perception.” Essentially, the UK wanted to regain U.S. respect in order to maintain the “special relationship.”¹⁴³

The collective belief in the legitimacy and importance of the mission, which underlay the political will of contributing nations (even in the face of low public support), resulted in public statements of enduring commitment by a variety of national and Alliance leaders. The German foreign minister stated in mid-2006 that Germany’s “engagement in Afghanistan is long-lasting.”¹⁴⁴ The Canadian government stated it would “finish the mission” and “get the job done” in the fall of 2006¹⁴⁵ and then reiterated its commitment in early 2007.¹⁴⁶ The New Zealand defense minister pledged his country’s commitment to the Alliance’s mission shortly after New Zealand troops came under ISAF command.¹⁴⁷ U.S. Ambassador to Afghanistan Ronald Neumann and President Bush repeatedly stated that the United States would stay committed in Afghanistan.¹⁴⁸ This cross-national solidarity was reinforced by improved relations between the United States and European allies. The anti-American hostility generated by the Iraq war was receding by 2007 and relations were “on an upswing,” according to U.S. Defense Secretary Robert Gates.¹⁴⁹ Secretary General Jaap de Hoop Scheffer stated after an informal defense ministers meeting in February 2008 that the allies “were of the opinion that we are there having entered a long-term commitment.”¹⁵⁰ The Alliance’s long-term commitment was formally reiterated at the Bucharest Summit in April 2008.¹⁵¹ This enduring political will was supported by cautious optimism that ISAF

¹⁴³ Officer F.

¹⁴⁴ “Steinmeier Reasserts Germany’s Pledge to Afghanistan,” *Deutsche Welle*, August 21, 2006.

¹⁴⁵ Jeffrey Simpson, “Pay attention to this voice in the Afghan wilderness,” *Globe and Mail*, October 17, 2006.

¹⁴⁶ “Canada rules out troops’ withdrawal,” *Pajhwok Afghan News*, February 13, 2007.

¹⁴⁷ “New Zealand Assures NATO on Commitment to Afghan Mission,” January 24, 2007, <http://www.afghannewscenter.com/news/2007/January/jan242007.html>.

¹⁴⁸ Neumann, *The Other War*, 13, 57, 97, 118.

¹⁴⁹ Robert M. Gates, *Duty: Memoirs of a Secretary at War* (New York: Vintage Books, 2014), 150.

¹⁵⁰ NATO, “Press Conference by NATO Secretary General, Jaap de Hoop Scheffer following the informal meeting with non-NATO KFOR contributing nations,” February 7, 2008, http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/opinions_7439.htm.

¹⁵¹ NATO, “Bucharest Summit Declaration, Issued by the Heads of State and Government participating in the meeting of the North Atlantic Council in Bucharest on 3 April 2008,” April 3, 2008, http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natolive/official_texts-8443.htm.

could succeed in the end, but there were challenges that needed to be surmounted.¹⁵² ISAF repeatedly demonstrated its operational competence because it defeated the Taliban whenever it attacked, and so political leaders developed a level of confidence in the deployed forces. This generated a sort of top-down cohesion.

More importantly, cohesion was reinforced and sustained from the bottom-up for organizational reasons. The coalition was deeply multinational, with most units (battle groups, PRTs, and OMLT/POMLTs), regional forces, and all major headquarters (from the regional commands to ISAF, and even CFC-A) comprised of multiple contributing nations. In RC-North, 18 nations operated together and some of the smaller nations received German logistical support (Albania, Croatia, Macedonia).¹⁵³ In RC-West, a Spanish helicopter squadron provided transport, attack, and maneuver support to all the multinational forces in the region.¹⁵⁴ In RC-South, Danish and Canadian armor units, and an Estonian maneuver company and medical element, were embedded with the British in Helmand.¹⁵⁵ In Uruzgan, the Dutch task force included combat engineers, a combined arms battle group, and special forces from Australia, a Slovenian platoon, and a Singapore medical element.¹⁵⁶ Even the predominantly U.S. region of RC-East was multinational. For example, the Polish battalion and brigade battle groups deployed after 2006 were embedded in U.S. units in the volatile regions of Paktika and Ghazni.¹⁵⁷ A U.S. battalion task force commander in Kunar and

¹⁵² “Press Conference by NATO Secretary General, Jaap de Hoop Scheffer following the informal meeting with non-NATO KFOR contributing nations.”

¹⁵³ Colonel Uwe Hartmann, German Army (served as the Deputy Chief of Staff for Stability, HQ, Regional Command-North, Mazar-e-Sharif, ISAF, Afghanistan, September 2012-February 2013), interview with author at Carlisle Barracks, PA, March 14, 2014; and Colonel Horst Busch, German Army.

¹⁵⁴ Lieutenant Colonel Javier Marcos, Spanish Army.

¹⁵⁵ Officer F; and Colonel Robbie Boyd, British Army (served as commander of the British Theatre Reserve Battalion; the battalion sent elements on multiple deployments to support operations in Helmand Province, Regional Command-South, ISAF, Afghanistan, between June 2009 and November 2010), interview with author at Carlisle Barracks, PA, April 15, 2013.

¹⁵⁶ Colonel Johannes Hoogstraten, Netherlands Army (served as the Deputy Chief of Staff for Operations, Headquarters, Regional Command-South, Kandahar, ISAF, Afghanistan, October 2008-July 2009), interview with author at Carlisle Barracks, PA, February 12, 2014.

¹⁵⁷ Colonel Piotr Bieniek, Polish Army (served as the Battalion Executive Officer of the Polish battle group in Paktika and Ghazni Provinces, Regional Command-East, ISAF, March-November 2008; also served as the Polish Liaison Officer to ISAF SOF, Kabul, Afghanistan, March-October 2010), interview with author at Carlisle Barracks, PA February 12, 2014. Also, Colonel Dariusz Parylak, Polish Army (served as the Chief of Strategic Planning, Task Force White Eagle, Ghazni Province,

Wardak Provinces stated he operated with a Lithuanian OMLT, which was embedded in one of his partnered ANA battalions, and Hungarian special forces, who trained one of his partnered ANP units.¹⁵⁸ The battlespace for another U.S. brigade covered five provinces and the unit operated and coordinated with the New Zealand and Turkish PRTs, Norwegian special forces, and the French regimental battle group and OMLT in its area.¹⁵⁹ When Jordan decided to join ISAF it insisted it be embedded with U.S. units and so its 800-man combat battalion deployed to RC-East.¹⁶⁰ The nature of national contributions also produced multi-nationality. For example, by 2008 the Australian contributions included a special operations group operating across the country, a battle group conducting training and reconstruction that was embedded in the Dutch task force in Uruzgan, an engineer task force embedded in the Dutch PRT in Tarin Kowt, a detachment of CH-47 transport helicopters embedded with the combat aviation battalion in Kandahar, an air force radar detachment in Kandahar, an artillery detachment embedded with a British artillery battery in Helmand, and individuals assigned to various OMLTs and the RC-South and ISAF headquarters.¹⁶¹

Major operations were multinational. A former Dutch commander of RC-South, Lieutenant General Mart de Kruif, described the situation well:

Now, when [a young Dutch commander] leaves the base, he's accompanied by Afghan national army and Afghan national police. They are mentored by Australians and by French. The camp is guarded by Slovaks. His top cover comes from Belgian F-16s and Mirages from France and U.S. fighters from Bagram. If he gets in a fight in troops-in-contact, and one of his soldiers is wounded, we call in the MEDEVAC helicopter from the United States, which is accompanied by Apaches from the Dutch Air Force. We bring him back to the field dressing station where a surgical team from Singapore saves his life,

Regional Command-East, ISAF, Afghanistan, October 2008-May 2009), interview with author at Carlisle Barracks, PA, April 9, 2013.

¹⁵⁸ Colonel William Butler, U.S. Army (served in Afghanistan as a brigade executive officer, Regional Command-South, April 2005-February 2006; the Deputy CJ3 in CJTF-76, Bagram, February-May 2006; a battalion commander, Regional Command-East, ISAF, October 2009-November 2010; and a senior observer/controller at the Joint Maneuver Readiness Center, Hohenfels, Germany, June 2011-June 2012 where he trained and certified U.S. battalions and NATO battle groups deploying to Afghanistan, as well as military and police mentoring teams), interview with author at Carlisle Barracks, PA, April 8, 2013

¹⁵⁹ Lieutenant Colonel Mark Holler, U.S. Army.

¹⁶⁰ Commander Thomas Singleton, U.S. Navy (served as the J5 in ISAF HQ/U.S. Forces-Afghanistan coordinating the missions, arrival schedule, and logistical support for non-NATO force contributions to ISAF, Kabul, Afghanistan, March 2009-February 2010), interview with author at Carlisle Barracks, PA, November 27, 2013.

¹⁶¹ Colonel Shane Gabriel, Australian Army.

probably with blood from the British blood bank from Helmand. Then we call in a Canadian C-130; we fly him back to Kandahar where nurses from Romania will take him to the operating room where a surgeon from the United States will stabilize him. We fly him back with a British plane to the United Kingdom and we pick him up there. This is reality . . . on a day-to-day basis.¹⁶²

The inter-weaving of units and specialist capabilities, particularly combat air support, intelligence, medical, and transport, forced the allies to rely on each other and this generated constant training efforts once forces arrived in country. To ensure interoperability units ironed out communication and coordination procedures through exercises before crisis situations or combat operations because there was “constant concern” about the need to minimize “misunderstandings.”¹⁶³ Training and operating together generated trust and the norms and practices that partners do not abandon each other, especially in adversity. In fact, “the heat of battle” acted as a sort of incubator of cohesion. According to the officers interviewed for this thesis, as units fought together, their feeling of mutual trust and confidence tended to increase over time. The bonding was so extensive that according to one officer, “From the first moment when you got to Afghanistan, actually you forget your nationality. You just need to bond with . . . any other level who actually brings you some support, help, whatever . . .”¹⁶⁴ Another officer echoed this sentiment, observing “There isn’t nationality, there’s just the team.”¹⁶⁵ Another officer stated, “The flags don’t matter when you are fighting . . . the most important thing is that you are helping the Afghans and you are fighting with other soldiers, regardless if he is Italian or American . . . there is no difference in the fight. Cohesion was something real, above all in difficult situations.”¹⁶⁶ Another officer attributed the high levels of trust to the common values shared by soldiers from contributing nations, longstanding relationships from the stationing of U.S. and other allied forces in Europe (and decades of training and operating together), and the shared ethos of professional soldiering: “I’m a soldier, he’s a soldier. We’re there to protect the

¹⁶² Lieutenant General Mart de Kruif, Commander, Royal Netherlands Army (Remarks at International Fellows Hall of Fame Induction Ceremony, U.S. Army War College, Carlisle Barracks, PA, January 7, 2013).

¹⁶³ Colonel Horst Busch, German Army. Other officers interviewed made similar comments.

¹⁶⁴ Colonel Denis Tretinjak, Croatian Army.

¹⁶⁵ Colonel Piotr Bieniek, Polish Army.

¹⁶⁶ Lieutenant Colonel Javier Marcos, Spanish Army.

people and accomplish a mission.”¹⁶⁷ Another officer observed that the standing multinational formations in Europe, such as the Eurocorps, German-French Brigade, and 1 (German/Netherlands) Corps, generated cohorts of officers, NCOs, and soldiers who were “used to working with other nations, on a day-to-day basis.” This was advantageous in Afghanistan, especially at the tactical level, because the troops “would know how others would react . . . [they would] know their way of thinking about things”¹⁶⁸ which was critical in high stress combat situations when split second decisions needed to be made. The knowledge and familiarity produced both interoperability and cohesion.

It also appears that the trust and commitment of military forces on the ground influenced national political leaders (and thus sustained national policy and political will) through the senior military commanders. For example, a Spanish officer who served in RC-West claimed Spanish senior military leaders and the minister of defense convinced Prime Minister Zapatero to increase troop levels in Afghanistan in 2004, even though he had come into office promising “no more troops.”¹⁶⁹ According to another officer:

One of the histories of the British presence in Helmand Province is military officers, who’ve been blooded or have . . . leading their men, saying we’ve got to do more here, we’ve got to do more . . . and that becomes a voice. We’ve got to support our troops. We’ve got to get this right. We’ve got to get the strategy right, therefore politicians deliver this . . . deliver us the right equipment. Deliver us the right manpower levels. You have got to own this now, because we’re fighting for you and we’re fighting with these allies . . . and they are critical to us.¹⁷⁰

The fighting forces, therefore, generated and sustained cohesion from the bottom-up. Over this period, the various ISAF commanders repeatedly asked for more forces. While the coalition forces managed to successfully defeat insurgent attacks where they occurred, many times they were only “just sufficient.”¹⁷¹ Give the hard won gains, commanders did not want to lose them, and they could not do this without more forces, either Afghan or coalition, to hold territory, especially since the reliance on overwhelming firepower could produce

¹⁶⁷ Lieutenant Colonel Timothy Davis, U.S. Army.

¹⁶⁸ Colonel Horst Busch, German Army. This observation was made by others who were interviewed.

¹⁶⁹ Lieutenant Colonel Javier Marcos, Spanish Army.

¹⁷⁰ Officer F. This sentiment was expressed by others who were interviewed.

¹⁷¹ General David Richards, “A firm foundation,” *NATO Review* (January 2007), <http://www.nato.int/docu/review/2007/Reviewing-Riga/EN/index.htm>.

unacceptable levels of civilian casualties which undermined Afghan support. To assuage Afghan government concerns, maintain public support, and counter Taliban propaganda, the coalition needed to shift its approach, but it took years for this to happen. As the next chapter will show, force levels were eventually substantially increased, the ISAF commanders imposed more restrictive rules of engagement to reduce civilian casualties, and the coalition changed its operational approach by implementing a coordinated civil-military campaign plan.

As the forces on the ground operated together, NATO's strategic-level organizational capacities incrementally changed in ways that supported ISAF. The changes were adaptations based on learning. Just as ISAF learned and adapted operationally, so did NATO learn and adapt. The creation of ACT meant the Alliance had the structural capacity to prepare units and specialist teams for deployment. In 2004, the NATO Joint Warfare Center in Stavanger, Norway began providing mission rehearsal training and exercises for the ISAF headquarters commanders and staffs prior to their deployment to Kabul.¹⁷² In 2007, the new NATO Joint Force Training Center in Bydgoszcz, Poland began providing mission rehearsal training and exercises for the regional command headquarters elements as they prepared to deploy. In 2008, it began training brigade, corps, and garrison level OMLT teams (*kandak* OMLTs were trained at the U.S. Joint Readiness Training Center in Hohenfels, Germany) and in 2010 it began training POMLTs.¹⁷³ Due to the difficulties NATO headquarters had in filling shortfalls in national force contributions and operational enablers (such as transport helicopters), it instituted annual force generation conferences in November 2004. The conferences identified all of the Alliance's operational needs (ISAF, KFOR, etc.) for the next 12 months. Thus, it tried to minimize issuing reactive short notice requests for forces. The conferences also provided a venue for allies to see how equitable

¹⁷² "Admiral Sir Mark Stanhope: DSACT," *NATO Review* (March 2005), <http://www.nato.int/docu/review/2005/NATO-Transformation/EN/index.htm>.

¹⁷³ Colonel Christopher Cardoni, U.S. Army (served as the Chief, Operational Mentoring and Liaison Team training section at the NATO Joint Force Training Center, Bydgoszcz, Poland, September 2007-April 2010), interview with author at Carlisle Barracks, PA, November 15, 2013.

the burden-sharing was.¹⁷⁴ In November 2005, NATO convened a workshop in Brussels for all the countries and organizations involved in PRTs. Discussions involved the roles, tasks, and practices of the diverse array of PRTs in order to share lessons learned, disseminate best practices, and harmonize PRT activities.¹⁷⁵

Some of the incremental changes and adaptations were only partial. For example, the U.S. Army and Marine Corps jointly published a new counter-insurgency doctrine in 2006.¹⁷⁶ However, during the period under examination in this chapter, NATO did not have and did not publish a COIN doctrine.¹⁷⁷ There were no uniform standards for certifying battle groups or for training the PRTs or the ETT/PMT and OMLT/POMLT teams. Nations were not required to send their forces to the ACT facilities in Norway or Poland. The larger contributing nations, such as the U.S., UK, France, Italy, Canada, and Germany developed their own national training programs; the smaller contributing nations relied on the NATO training infrastructure because they lacked sufficient national training capabilities. Even though the SACEUR announced a standardized system for tracking progress in Afghanistan using 63 metrics in December 2005,¹⁷⁸ national capitals (as well as ISAF and NATO headquarters) had voracious appetites for reports, and there was no single standard for reporting format, or for measuring, or calculating successes and failures.¹⁷⁹ Finally, command structures and relationships were incrementally adjusted as forces levels increased, missions changed or expanded, and the conflict worsened. However, by and large, during this period, they were disjointed. Additional learning and adaptation was clearly needed to ensure more effective operations and to break the stalemate.

¹⁷⁴ Steve Sturm, "Matching capabilities to commitments," *NATO Review* (March 2005), <http://www.nato.int/docu/review/2005/NATO-Transformation/EN/index.htm>.

¹⁷⁵ NATO Press Release, "Workshop on Provincial Reconstruction Teams' Best Practices," November 30, 2005, http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/news_21586.htm.

¹⁷⁶ Wright, *A Different Kind of War*, 324.

¹⁷⁷ General Richards stated in an interview after he left command of ISAF that he did not know whether or not NATO actually had a COIN doctrine. Cobbold, "RUSI Interview with General David Richards," 26.

¹⁷⁸ Andrew Gray, "NATO revamps measures of Afghan progress," *Reuters*, December 5, 2007.

¹⁷⁹ Conclusion based on interviews. The officers who served as national contingent commanders in particular noted the dual reporting chains they responded to.

During this period, there were also clearly collective action problems as NATO got involved in Afghanistan and then expanded ISAF which can be considered fraying forces at the operational level. For example, the German forces did not fly at night, so they could not provide MEDEVAC support during night operations; they also did not fly in bad weather.¹⁸⁰ These were conditions imposed on the German military by its political authorities, who were casualty averse and concerned about low public support.¹⁸¹ Italian reluctance to loosen caveats and send troops to the south in 2006 to conduct combat operations was related to its constitution which outlawed war.¹⁸² The coalition had to figure out how to operate within the myriad of national constraints. Sometimes partners shifted their positions: France, Germany, Italy, and Spain would not permanently send troops to the south, but agreed at the Riga Summit to deploy them to the region in emergencies.¹⁸³

It can be argued many countries constrained what they did due to the attributes of their national militaries - small size and narrow operational competence - rather than a desire to free-ride. European countries had much smaller pools of available forces to draw from than the United States, as shown in the table below. Those countries with conscript armies were further constrained by national laws which banned conscripts from being involuntarily deployed on foreign missions. They relied on volunteers, which necessitated the creation of ad hoc units for deployment.¹⁸⁴ While 11 of the countries listed below phased out conscription between 2003 and 2011 (Czech Republic, Germany, Hungary, Italy, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Portugal, Slovakia, Slovenia, and Sweden), the pool of available forces for most countries decreased as governments cut defense budgets. The largest allies made

¹⁸⁰ Colonel Ivar Omsted, Norwegian Army.

¹⁸¹ "No rush for the exit, yet."

¹⁸² Colonel Alberto Vezzoli, Italian Army (served concurrently as the Senior Mentor to the Chief of Staff of the Afghan 207th Corps and the Chief of Staff of the OMLT assigned to the 207th Corps, Herat, Regional Command-West, ISAF, Afghanistan, November 2008-July 2009; also served as the deputy commander of a battle group that operated in Shindand and Herat, Regional Command-West, ISAF, Afghanistan, April-October 2010), interview with author at Carlisle Barracks, PA, January 23, 2014.

¹⁸³ A few of the officers interviewed also quietly acknowledged they would come help *in extremis* in spite of caveats, which is another example of bonding and trust.

¹⁸⁴ In the interviews, as the officers from the countries with conscript armies talked about the rotations of OMLT/POMLT teams, PRTs, battle groups, and SOF forces, they never mentioned having difficulty in finding volunteers. Rather, a number of them explained they had selection processes to pick the best since they had more volunteers than they needed.

European Armed Forces (2002/2003)

Country	Prof/Consc	Army	Navy	Air Force	Total
Austria	Conscript	34,600	0	6,850	34,600
Belgium	Professional	24,800	2,450	10,250	39,200
Czechy	Conscript	39,850	0	13,100	49,400
Denmark	Conscript	14,700	4,000	3,500	22,700
Estonia	Conscript	2,550	440	220	5,000
Finland	Conscript	19,200	5,000	2,800	31,800
France	Professional	137,000	44,250	64,000	260,000
Germany	Conscript	191,350	25,650	67,500	296,000
Greece	Conscript	114,000	19,000	33,000	177,000
Hungary	Conscript	23,600	0	7,700	33,000
Ireland	Professional	8,500	1,100	860	10,500
Italy	Conscript	116,000	36,000	48,000	216,000
Latvia	Conscript	4,000	620	250	5,500
Lithuania	Conscript	7,950	650	1,150	13,500
Luxembourg	Professional	900	0	0	900
Netherlands	Professional	23,150	12,130	11,050	49,600
Norway	Conscript	14,700	6,100	5,000	26,600
Poland	Conscript	104,050	14,300	36,450	163,000
Portugal	Conscript	26,700	10,950	7,250	43,600
Slovakia	Conscript	13,700	0	7,000	26,000
Slovenia	Conscript	6,500	0	530	9,000
Spain	Professional	95,600	22,900	22,750	177,900
Sweden	Conscript	13,800	7,900	5,900	33,000
Turkey	Conscript	402,000	52,750	60,100	514,850
UK	Professional	116,670	42,370	53,620	210,400

Source: Jolyon Howorth, "A European Union with Teeth?" in Nicolas Jabko and Craig Parsons, eds., *The State of the European Union, Vol. 7: With US or Against US? European Trends in American Perspective* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), 50.

the deepest cuts. By 2010, the British armed forces had been reduced to 180,000, the French armed forces to 211,000, and German armed forces to 252,000.¹⁸⁵ Operationally, the smaller allies were not capable of conducting high intensity combat operations, much less complex counter-insurgency operations,¹⁸⁶ so they volunteered to do the missions where they had useful capacity, for example, Bulgarian, Macedonian and Slovakian (as well as Mongolian) forces guarded bases. Other countries provided trainers (Albania, Croatia, and Slovenia).

The plethora of ongoing multinational missions worldwide put further pressure on national governments because they did not have unlimited operational capability. Thus,

¹⁸⁵ King, *The Transformation of Europe's Armed Forces*, 34-36.

¹⁸⁶ Lieutenant General (retired) Jon Riley commented on the operational capabilities and competence of allied nations in his testimony to Oxford's Changing Character of War Program; Jon Riley, "NATO Operations in Afghanistan 2008-2009: A Theatre-Level View," in Jonathan Bailey, Richard Iron, and Hew Strachan, eds., *British Generals in Blair's Wars* (Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2013), 240.

political will was strained by other operational deployments which constrained ISAF operationally. The coalition never had sufficient resources during this period to achieve its campaign objectives. The “competing” multinational missions included the ongoing stabilization missions in Bosnia and Kosovo. By 2004, the UN had legitimized the stabilization mission in Iraq and 39 countries joined a multinational effort comprised of 163,930 military forces. Poland and the UK had also volunteered to be lead nations for two of the five regional commands, Multinational Division Center-South and Multinational Division South-East.¹⁸⁷ The British contribution to Iraq was large in relative terms (more than 8,000 in 2004, reduced to about 4,500 in 2007) however the war degenerated badly, forcing the UK to stay longer than originally intended, which had consequences for Afghanistan. Between 2006 and 2008, Britain found itself fighting “two campaigns without being able to resource either of them properly” and consequently it found itself “mowing the grass” in Helmand – repeating tactical operations in the same areas over and over because it did not have sufficient forces to hold what it cleared.¹⁸⁸ In the United States, Defense Secretary Gates realized he had a similar resource problem in 2007. President Bush announced the surge in Iraq the same month that U.S. commanders in Afghanistan requested more forces. Gates realized he could not “deliver in both places at once.” While he was able to provide some of the requested forces to Afghanistan, the Iraq surge meant U.S. “ground forces were stretched very thin.”¹⁸⁹ France also felt the pressure. In 2007, it had 16,000 forces deployed in multiple locations (Chad, Côte d’Ivoire, Lebanon, Balkans, and Afghanistan), so as with other nations it was spread thinly and did not have a lot of excess to deploy to Afghanistan.¹⁹⁰ To a certain extent, the variations in security conditions across the country and the broad range of missions were advantageous for the coalition because they

¹⁸⁷ Andrew Graham, “Iraq 2004: The View from Baghdad,” in Bailey, Iron, and Strachan, eds., *British Generals in Blair’s Wars*, 103, 141.

¹⁸⁸ Hew Strachan, “British Generals in Blair’s Wars: Conclusion,” in *Ibid.*, 335.

¹⁸⁹ Gates, *Duty*, 200, 202.

¹⁹⁰ Mike Blanchfield, “France defends its military contribution in Afghanistan,” *CanWest News Service*, February 21, 2007.

provided options to the contributing nations, however in the aggregate none of them provided sufficient resources.

The diverse nature of national military capabilities and the wide range of missions required headquarters staffs that would “knit” the various contributed elements together in the most effective manner possible. This was a time-consuming, often difficult, and continuous process, since most contributing nations maintained short troop rotation periods; six months was common. Their efforts were complicated by overlapping OEF and ISAF mandates. OEF forces operated independently in the north and west in 2004-2005 during the ISAF expansion. NATO’s assumption of all the regional commands did not centralize command and control. There were still largely autonomous OEF forces (CSTC-A and CJSOTF-A) operating throughout the country. Furthermore, there was no unity of effort within ISAF. Even though the ISAF headquarters created campaign plans that were sent to JFC Brunssum for formal approval, the ISAF commander left it to the regional commanders to carry out operations independently and individually. Not only did each of the regional commands essentially “fight their own war,”¹⁹¹ but RC-South itself had three different conflicts ongoing in Helmand, Kandahar, and Uruzgan and there was no cooperation between the provinces.¹⁹² This de-centralized execution of military activities produced major negative operational consequences. A number of the officers interviewed commented that the Taliban coalition recognized the lack of coordination and cooperation within ISAF and subsequently exploited the seams between the regional commands. The conflict developed a kind of “whack-a-mole” character as a result. Overall, the command and control structures and processes were unwieldy during this period and they created an additional fragility, or vulnerability, for the coalition: personal relationships became critical.¹⁹³ At times they were the only thing that ensured some coherence across operational activities.

¹⁹¹ Sherwood McGinnis, U.S. State Department; also Lieutenant Colonel Mark Holler, U.S. Army.

¹⁹² Colonel Johannes Hoogstraten, Netherlands Army.

¹⁹³ The importance of personal relationships among the troops of all the contributing nations was an issue repeated by all the officers interviewed.

The overlapping of ISAF and OEF was more than geographic. For a time during the period, both coalitions were engaged in combat operations as well as stabilization and reconstruction. In other words, both of them conducted counter-insurgency operations, supported security sector reform activities, mentored and operationally partnered with the ANA, trained the ANSF, and conducted PRT activities. Furthermore, there was redundancy and overlap among the three areas of military activity: battle groups conducted security operations as well as governance (which included key leader engagements, *shuras*, and coordination with province and district leaders), training/partnering/mentoring, development, reconstruction, and humanitarian activities; PRTs conducted governance, development, reconstruction, and humanitarian activities as well as security operations and training/partnering/mentoring; and OMLTs conducted training/partnering/mentoring activities as well as accompanying Afghan units on security operations while coordinating air, fire, and medical support.¹⁹⁴ The three areas of military activity were frequently uncoordinated, despite the overlap, however at times they blended completely together. For example, the team leader for an OMLT in RC-North described a joint Afghan-coalition operation in 2008 that encompassed a battle group, PRT, and OMLT. His OMLT deployed with its *kandak* to Meymaneh in Faryab Province for an Afghan-led security operation. The Norwegian task force in the region was a combined battle group and PRT and it operated with the Afghans while his OMLT coordinated emergency combat and medical support.¹⁹⁵

It slowly became clear to the OEF and ISAF coalitions that their most crucial long-term activity was training and equipping the ANSF. It also slowly became evident how difficult the process would be. For example, there was an unprecedented need to institute literacy education and basic skills training, like drivers training, for both the army and

¹⁹⁴ Information from interviews, including Lieutenant Colonel Chris Mueller, U.S. Army; Colonel Shane Gabriel, Australian Army; Colonel Ivar Omsted, Norwegian Army; and Colonel Stephen Maranian, U.S. Army (served as the commander of a U.S. battalion task force, Nuristan Province, Regional Command-East, ISAF, Afghanistan, May 2007-July 2008) interview with author at Carlisle Barracks, PA, April 4, 2013.

¹⁹⁵ Colonel Denis Tretinjak, Croatian Army.

police.¹⁹⁶ Leaders perceived that a capable ANSF would be the agent that would allow the multinational forces to eventually withdraw, but the increasing violence over time meant they progressively increased the end-strength goals for the ANA and ANP. In December 2002, the coalitions and Afghan government initially set the goals of building a 70,000 ANA and 62,000 ANP by 2006.¹⁹⁷ In February 2008, they revised the goals to 80,000 ANA and 82,000 ANP by 2010.¹⁹⁸ In September 2008, they revised the ANA goal again to 134,000 by 2013. By the end of 2008, there were 79,000 ANA and 75,954 ANP on duty.¹⁹⁹ The constant revisions upwards meant the coalitions were constantly playing catch-up in the training missions. Commanders repeatedly highlighted their shortages in trainers and by 2008 both CSTC-A and ISAF could articulate in hard numbers what their requirements and shortfalls were, for example at the end of the year: U.S. ETTs required 2,225 trainers, but only 1,138 were assigned (50 percent fill); 2,375 trainers were required for the U.S. PMTs, but only 886 were assigned (37 percent fill); and NATO had filled only 42 of the 103 OMLT teams it had promised.²⁰⁰ These shortfalls were one reason the PRTs and battle groups took up training and mentoring, too. As ANA forces increased over time and were stationed across the country in the various ANA Corps they needed assistance in order to increasingly be involved in operations.

As soon as ANSF forces were available they were employed in partnership with coalition forces. The ANA began joint patrols in Kabul in 2003 with ISAF's multinational

¹⁹⁶ Colonel Keith Detwiler, U.S. Army (served as the Director for International Security Cooperation, NTM-A, ISAF, Kabul, Afghanistan, July 2010-July 2011), interview with author at Carlisle Barracks, PA, June 13, 2012; and Colonel Frederick Gellert, U.S. Army (served as the Chief, Police Force Management Division, NTM-A, ISAF, Kabul, Afghanistan, July 2011-June 2012; concurrently served as the Senior Advisor to the Afghan General Director of Force Management in the Ministry of the Interior), interview with author at Carlisle Barracks, PA, December 17, 2012. Interestingly, driver's training required a diverse mix of multinational trainers. The Afghan tank battalion had T-62 tanks which originated from the Soviet Union. So CJTF Phoenix put together a team of former East Germans and Romanians to train the tank drivers; Lieutenant Colonel Timothy Davis, U.S. Army.

¹⁹⁷ Catherine Dale, *War in Afghanistan: Strategy, Operations, and Issues for Congress* (Washington, DC: Congressional Research Service Report for Congress, March 9, 2011), 41.

¹⁹⁸ NATO, *Progress in Afghanistan: Bucharest Summit 2-4 April 2008* (Brussels: NATO Public Diplomacy Division, 2008), 8, 10.

¹⁹⁹ *Report on Progress toward Security and Stability in Afghanistan, January 2009*, 8, 35.

²⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, 38, 44.

brigade.²⁰¹ The ANA and ANP supported the elections in 2004 and 2005.²⁰² Afghan Army *kandaks* began assisting special operations forces in the south in 2004.²⁰³ By 2006, “virtually every ISAF operation against the Taliban [involved] ANA participation.”²⁰⁴ The standing up and employment of ANSF forces occurred while the AMF and other militias were dismantled under the DDR program, which was formally declared complete in July 2005.²⁰⁵

Overall, there was tremendous pressure on the ISAF coalition during the hard time of 2006-2008 because there were multiple potentially destructive fraying forces. They included intense intra-alliance acrimony about burden-sharing and the lack of will by major partners to engage in combat. The shock of tough combat shattered the initial assumptions about the character of the conflict and led to the realization that ISAF could not just engage in stabilization and reconstruction. It had to be ready to engage in complex counter-insurgency operations. This was undermined by insufficient resources – troops and enabling capabilities – which forced commanders to rely extensively on overwhelming direct and indirect fire support. This in turn resulted in collateral damage that eroded Afghan support. Disagreements on the role and purpose of OEF and ISAF, and the disjointed nature of their command and control relationships, despite their functional and geographic overlapping, hindered the coherent execution of the comprehensive approach. Furthermore, operational inefficiencies from restrictive national caveats and training and doctrinal shortfalls that led to only short-term tactical gains produced a widespread perception the international effort was a failure.

Taken together, and based on the historical experiences of alliances and coalitions, these pressures should have destroyed cohesion, fractured the coalition, and led to abandonment, especially since insurgent violence continued to increase. However, they did

²⁰¹ Colonel (retired) Phil Evans, U.S. Army.

²⁰² Alexander, *The Long Way Back*, 65; and NATO, *Progress in Afghanistan*, 8

²⁰³ Lieutenant Colonel Chris Mueller, U.S. Army.

²⁰⁴ James Snyder, “NATO Dispatch: Kabul,” *NATO Review* (October 2006), http://www.nato.int/docu/review/2006/Road_Riga/EN/index.htm.

²⁰⁵ Alexander, *The Long Way Back*, 96-97.

not. The coalition held together due to the interaction of the two drivers. Political will was derived from multiple alliance and domestic politics influences – including humanitarian and moral aspirations, solidarity in the face of a shared terrorist threat, and belief that ISAF’s defeat by the Taliban would be fatal for NATO as a security institution – and was sustained by incremental adaptations in organizational capacity at the strategic and operational levels (new organizational structures, new missions, new training initiatives) and operational- and tactical-level unit bonding through shared adversity. Together the drivers produced continuing cohesion. This cohesion endured even as the coalition grew from 31 to 40 nations and included countries like Azerbaijan, Georgia, Jordan, and Ukraine. As a result, even the “hard time” of 2006-2008 led to further commitments by a number of the allies and partners. In fact, between spring 2006 and November 2008, coalition forces significantly increased from 9,000 to 51,100 (see Appendix 4). Operationally, ISAF seemed to demonstrate it was a learning organization as it fought back (and *Operation Medusa* was a significant psychological success), shifted its operational approach, and undertook new missions in training, mentoring, and counter-insurgency. In short, both ISAF and NATO adapted to the changed character of the conflict as NATO got into the game. After a limited and constrained beginning in Kabul in 2003, by 2008 the ISAF footprint encompassed the whole country and was comprised of five regional commands along with the ISAF headquarters, 26 PRTs, a multitude of OMLT/POMLTs, and a wide variety of battle groups. However, the major shortfall in ISAF’s coalition operations was the continued national unwillingness to commit sufficient resources to ensure success. This contributed to the “catching-up” nature of coalition activities during this period.

Between 2003 and 2008, there were some major positive developments in Afghanistan such as: the completion of the Bonn Agreement by the holding of presidential and parliamentary elections; the initiation of the *Afghanistan Compact*; the economy more than doubled in six years; more than five million children were enrolled in school; and some

4,000 kilometers of roads were paved.²⁰⁶ Despite the positive progress, there was a perception of failure since the conflict was at a stalemate. By 2007-2008, the Bush administration realized something needed to change and it took the initial, tentative steps toward assuming a leading role. U.S. concerns about the conflict were paralleled at NATO headquarters and, as a result of consultation, plans were made to increase troop numbers and adjust the command and control configuration.²⁰⁷ President Bush decided to increase U.S. forces over the course of 2007 and 2008 in what he called a “silent surge.” Troop numbers rose from 21,000 to over 35,000. He doubled reconstruction funding, increased PRTs, “ordered more U.S. civilian experts to Afghanistan to help the ministries in Kabul become more effective (and less corrupt)” and encouraged the allies and partners to do more.²⁰⁸ The President also decided to establish better unity of command for U.S. forces and to improve coordination between ISAF and OEF. General David McKiernan took command of ISAF in June 2008 and, as will be described in the next chapter, he subsequently took command of the OEF forces (CSTC-A and CJSOTF-A) in October 2008. Furthermore, the allied assessments resulted in significant decisions that changed entirely the structure, scope, and focus of the coalition’s activities.

²⁰⁶ Richard A. Boucher, “Afghanistan: A Plan to Turn the Tide” (Remarks Before the Foreign Relations Committee, Washington, DC, January 31, 2008).

²⁰⁷ Sherwood McGinnis, U.S. State Department.

²⁰⁸ Gates, *Duty*, 199; and *Report on Progress toward Security and Stability in Afghanistan*, January 2009, 28.

CHAPTER 5

OCTOBER 2008-DECEMBER 2014: NATO SURGES

By the fall of 2008, the international coalition recognized it was in an untenable position as insurgent violence continued to rise. The allies and partners knew something needed to change if ISAF was to break the Taliban momentum. As a consequence, national governments, NATO headquarters, and the ISAF headquarters initiated a variety of strategic reviews. At the same time, there were intensive discussions about Afghanistan in multilateral and bilateral forums which included key Afghan representatives. Secretary General Jaap de Hoop Scheffer articulated the common view in February 2009: NATO allies and partners, through the ISAF coalition, needed to do more.¹ The question was what and how.

The answers were developed through a series of discussions and consultations at formal and informal defense and foreign minister meetings in 2008 and 2009 and they ultimately reflected substantial changes in the two drivers of the analytical framework. The United States, under the new president, Barack Obama, decided to substantially increase its contributions, in both personnel and material resources, and take a leading role in the coalition. The surge in U.S. commitment, particularly the tripling of forces deployed from 35,000 to over 100,000, sustained the collective political will of the allies and partners and led to further contributions from them. It also facilitated a significant change in ISAF's organizational structure, multiple adaptations in its operating procedures, and an expansion in its activities as OEF and ISAF fully merged. Although the ISAF coalition knew it still had a long, hard road ahead of it, the massive increase in resources finally gave it the means to prosecute a more effective counter-insurgency campaign and implement a more robust comprehensive approach (civilian and military efforts in the domains of security, economic development, and governance).

¹ NATO, "Press conference by NATO Secretary General Jaap de Hoop Scheffer after the Informal Meeting of NATO Defence Ministers, with Invitees, with non-NATO ISAF Contributing Nations," February 19, 2009, http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/opinions_51362.htm.

The changes in the coalition's organizational capacity produced more effective operational action, which in turn reinforced political commitment. In fact, the conflict shifted in 2010 when coalition and Afghan forces started to gain the upper hand due to erosions in Taliban capabilities. While national governments were openly starting to think about the timeline for withdrawal that year, the progressive improvements in Afghan army and police capabilities enabled the coalition to sustain the operational gains as it transitioned responsibility for security to Afghan forces between 2011 and 2013 and then conducted its withdrawal. In the end, the combination of the two drivers sustained cohesion throughout the period examined in this chapter – October 2008 through the end of the ISAF mission in December 2014.

This chapter will cover the decisions and actions that resulted from the deteriorating security situation. It will analyze the changes in the scope and focus of ISAF operations, which ultimately encompassed precision strike operations (also known as counter-terrorism operations), counter-insurgency and counter-narcotics operations, large-scale training, mentoring, and partnering with Afghan security forces, stability and reconstruction operations through PRTs, and institutional development through ministerial mentoring and advising, in the context of enduring cohesion during the toughest phase of the fighting (2008-2010) and the transition (2011-2014).

The Conflict Escalates and NATO Changes Direction

Insurgent violence, comprised of IED attacks, suicide bombings, small arms, mortar, and rocket attacks, and small-scale ambushes, was on a greatly escalating trend between 2008 and 2010, as the Taliban coalition regained some territory and fought hard against a strengthening ISAF. During this period, the conflict spiraled into more intense fighting because the ISAF coalition increasingly operated and remained, in partnership with ANSF forces, in areas that had previously been uncontested as their troop levels increased. The coalition was also increasingly successful in de-activating and clearing IEDs before they exploded, based on information provided by local Afghans; see Figures 1 and 2 below.

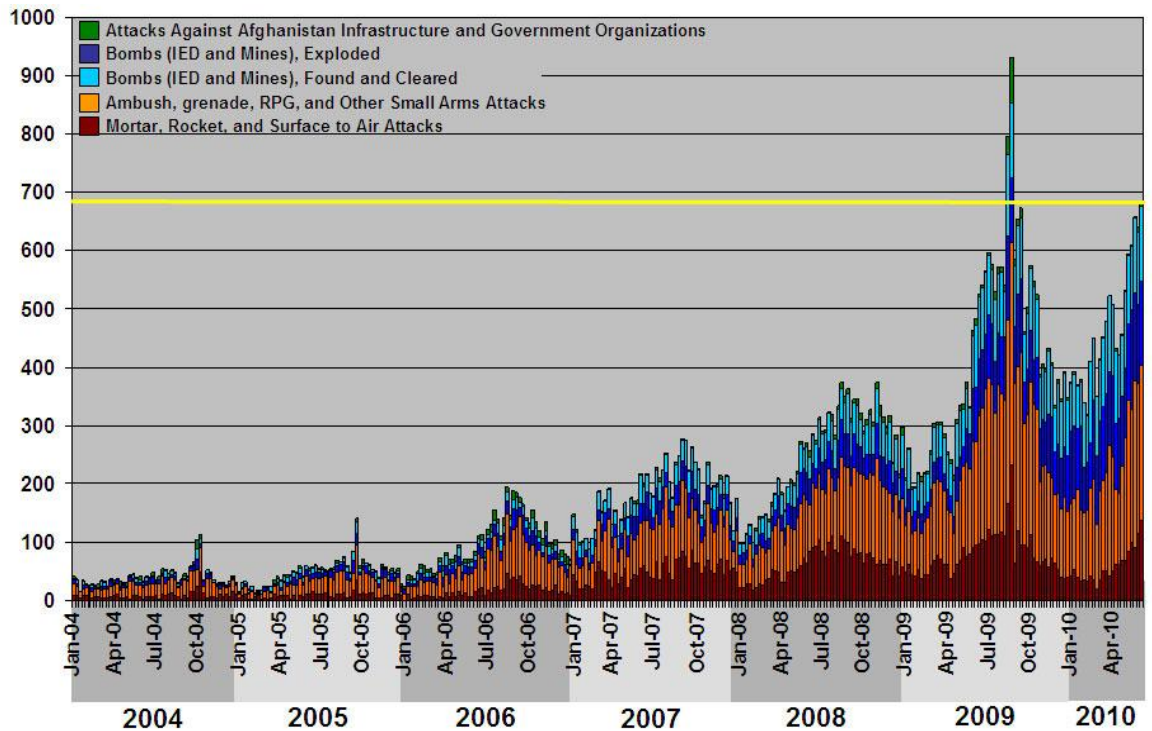


Figure 1: Number of Insurgent Attacks and Type by Week, January 2004-July 2010 (source: Afghanistan Index: Tracking Variables of Reconstruction & Security in Post-9/11 Afghanistan, November 11, 2010).

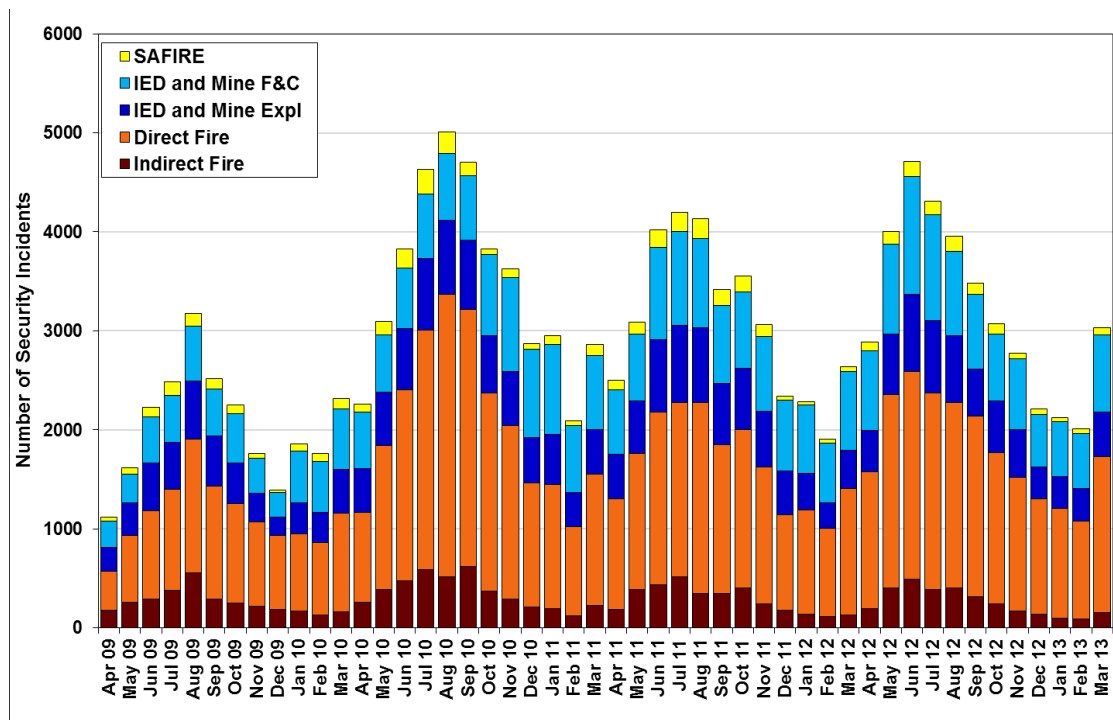


Figure 2: Monthly Security Incidents, April 2009-March 2013 (source: Report on Progress Toward Security and Stability in Afghanistan, July 2013).

As the conflict escalated, coalition nations, NATO, and ISAF conducted major strategic assessments as they consulted together. The result was a succession of decisions in 2008 and 2009 that dramatically increased resources - between November 2008 and November 2010 coalition forces almost doubled from 70,100 to 130,930.² The coalition also agreed to undertake major organizational changes that enabled operational activities that were substantial orders of magnitude larger than previous combat and non-combat operations.

The Bush administration's review and planning effort in the latter half of 2008 started the process. It was a coordinated effort among the president's National Security Council, the new commander of CENTCOM, General David Petraeus, NATO, ISAF, and UNAMA.³ The first major change for the multinational coalition was the president's decision to appoint General McKiernan as the commander of OEF forces (CSTC-A and CJSOTF-A) in October 2008. This was meant to improve the linkage and coordination between the OEF and ISAF coalitions.⁴ The dual-hatting of McKiernan improved the U.S. operational unity of effort, but it did not establish unity of command for the rest of the multinational forces. While CSTC-A and CJSOTF-A came under McKiernan's command, they were still formally separate from the ISAF mission, so the ANSF training and mentoring mission, as well as special operations, remained de-linked from the security and stability operations of ISAF. The new command arrangements put General McKiernan in a position where he reported to two different command chains: to NATO for ISAF operations and to CENTCOM for OEF operations. This meant military operations remained disjointed; there was neither unity of command nor unity of effort for all the multinational forces.

In fact, the whole coalition suffered from very complex command and control structures and General McKiernan's position was not unique in that he was required to serve

² "International Security Assistance Force," ISAF Placemat, November 25, 2008 and November 15, 2010, <http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natolive/107995.htm>.

³ Bush, *Decision Points*, 218; and Alexander, *The Long Way Back*, 199, 203, 213.

⁴ General McKiernan did not take over command of detainee operations or the most sensitive counter-terrorism operations. Detainee operations continued under the direct control of CENTCOM until January 2010 when ISAF stood up Joint Task Force 435. The task force's main mission was to transition detainee operations to the Afghan government; *Report on Progress Toward Security and Stability in Afghanistan, April 2010* (Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Defense Report to Congress, 2010), 54.

multiple masters. Each contributing nation designated a national contingent commander. These officers were the senior officers in country, and they held a wide variety of positions. Some held “just” the job of contingent commander which allowed them to focus on providing administrative, logistical, and operational support to their national forces, but others were dual-hatted with another responsibility: such as serving as a PRT commander, a battle group commander, or as a commander or staff member in a regional command or in the ISAF headquarters. They were required to report back to, and were ultimately answerable to, their national governments, as well as serve the ISAF/NATO chain of command.⁵ This complexity was unavoidable because it was an enduring aspect of NATO. Even when operating in multinational formations, sustainment and logistical support remains the responsibility of the contributing nations.

The United States further complicated the situation when it created U.S. Forces-Afghanistan (USFOR-A) in October 2008 when General McKiernan took over CSTC-A and CJSOTF-A (see Appendix 2). This new command filled the gap CENTCOM created when it de-activated CFC-A in 2007 and it brought all U.S. forces in country under one commander. The command had the institutional capacity to provide the administrative and logistical support that the RC-East headquarters had been incapable of providing to the increasing U.S. footprint.⁶ However, USFOR-A was also partially merged with the ISAF headquarters. For example, a U.S. officer was dual-hatted to serve as the J1 (personnel officer) for both ISAF headquarters and USFOR-A. But if a senior staff position in ISAF headquarters was filled by an allied nation, the United States created a mirror position in USFOR-A. For example, in 2010 the Deputy Commander (DCOM) of ISAF was a British officer and the

⁵ Colonel Ingrid Gjerde, Norwegian Army (served as the commander of the Norwegian contingent in Afghanistan, Mazar-e-Sharif, Regional Command-North, ISAF, Afghanistan, June 2011-January 2012), interview with author at Carlisle Barracks, PA, April 12, 2013. Lieutenant Colonel Ken Knudsen, Danish Army (served both as the commander of the Danish contingent in Afghanistan and as the commander of a battle group battalion, Helmand Province, Regional Command-Southwest, ISAF, Afghanistan, August 2011-February 2012), interview with author at Carlisle Barracks, PA, May 6, 2013. Author interview at Carlisle Barracks, PA with Officer C (who served as a contingent commander and in a PRT in Afghanistan), May 14, 2013.

⁶ Headquarters, RC-East had become the default national support element for all U.S. forces in country when CFC-A de-activated.

ISAF Chief of Staff (COS) was a German officer, and so USFOR-A created mirrored DCOM and COS positions filled by Americans for its headquarters staff.⁷ Staff officers within the various departments also worked for both elements. This created a rather confusing situation. Overall, the command and control structures remained too unwieldy, they needed further change, particularly as violence continued to increase.

While the Bush administration was conducting its review, General McKiernan requested additional forces – three combat brigades and an aviation brigade – totaling some 20,000 troops. The President supported the increase in forces, but since the troop deployments would not occur until 2009, the administration decided to quietly pass its support for the review's recommendations and the troop increase to the incoming Obama administration for its formal decision and approval. In February and March 2009, President Obama approved an increase of over 21,000 troops as he simultaneously announced his strategy for Afghanistan, after an initial strategic review.⁸ The administration's assessing and reviews continued the rest of the year and senior officials, the vice president, secretary of state, and defense secretary, consulted with and kept NATO allies and partners informed throughout the year.⁹ Both Defense Secretary Gates and Secretary General Anders Fogh Rasmussen also tasked General Stanley McChrystal to conduct a comprehensive review at the operational level when he assumed command of ISAF in June 2009.¹⁰ General McChrystal concluded the security situation was serious and deteriorating¹¹ and he requested another large troop increase, an additional 40,000 troops. After extensive and contentious deliberation, the President announced in December 2009 that the United States

⁷ Personal papers, Lieutenant Colonel Eric Shafa, U.S. Air Force, ISAF Liaison to the Afghan Ministry of Mines, Ministry of Urban Development, Ministry of Energy and Water, and Ministry of Public Works, June 2010-May 2011.

⁸ Gates, *Duty*, 217, 223, 342, 343.

⁹ NATO, "Press conference by NATO Secretary General Jaap de Hoop Scheffer after the Informal Meeting of NATO Defence Ministers, with Invitees, with non-NATO ISAF Contributing Nations;" and NATO, "Press conference by NATO Secretary General Jaap de Hoop Scheffer after the meeting of the North Atlantic Council with Invitees in Foreign Ministerial Session," March 5, 2009, http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/opinions_51371.htm

¹⁰ General Stanley McChrystal, *My Share of the Task: A Memoir* (New York: Portfolio/Penguin, 2013), 294.

¹¹ Commander, NATO International Security Assistance Force, Afghanistan, *Commander's Initial Assessment*, August 30, 2009, 1-1.

would send an additional 30,000 troops in the next year.¹² The surges in U.S. forces meant the American commitment to ISAF increased from about 15,000 troops (before President Bush's silent surge) to 90,000 by October 2010.¹³ The United States therefore clearly communicated its concern about the seriousness of the security situation and it increased its commitment to Afghanistan to try to make ISAF operations more effective.

While President Obama's surge announcement in December 2009 reflected a significant change in direction, which was welcomed by the allies, it also created some uncertainty. It meant the United States would assume a leadership role as ISAF transformed its command and control configuration and modified its operational approach once again. The president's remark that the U.S. commitment was not open-ended, that forces would begin withdrawing in July 2011, and combat operations would end by 2014 opened the door for the allies and partners to start overtly thinking about and planning for the ISAF transition and withdrawal. However, the July 2011 date was widely misinterpreted by many Afghans who feared international abandonment once again, so to affect some damage control Secretary Gates bluntly stated at the June 2010 NATO defense ministerial that the July 2011 date was the start of a process. Any transition to ANSF and coalition withdrawal would depend on the recommendations of the ISAF commander, the SCR, and the Afghan government based on security conditions on the ground. He also repeatedly reassured the Afghans the drawdown would be gradual.¹⁴ In the end, the United States did not withdraw surge forces until 2012. Secretary of State Clinton also assured the Karzai government that the U.S. commitment would endure "long after the combat troops have left."¹⁵

As the U.S. administration increased troops it also pressed the allies and partners to increase troop levels. Secretary General Rasmussen echoed the requests: "At every bilateral

¹² Gates, *Duty*, 354-384.

¹³ "International Security Assistance Force," ISAF Placemat, September 10, 2007 and October 25, 2010, <http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natolive/107995.htm>. The combined U.S. OEF and ISAF force levels increased from about 21,000 to 101,000 during this time.

¹⁴ Gates, *Duty*, 485-486, 557.

¹⁵ "American and Afghanistan: Hug them tight," *The Economist*, May 15, 2010.

meeting he has banged the drum for more.”¹⁶ SHAPE formalized the process by adding the need for additional troops to its statement of requirements for ISAF.¹⁷ With the significant increases in military forces, it became more important for operations and training to be better coordinated and implemented and the existing command and control configuration was wholly inadequate. In fact, it actually worked against the synchronization of activities. An officer who was involved in the creation of USFOR-A and then served as the advisor for Afghan Minister of Defense Abdul Rahim Wardak described the situation, “There was an awful lot of confusion and lack of coordination that were going on because of separate mandates and chains of command.”¹⁸ Furthermore, as ISAF’s activities and span of control increased, the ISAF commander was forced to balance strategic, diplomatic, and political responsibilities with the operational responsibilities of a fighting commander and it did not work well. When he and the ISAF staff should have been focusing on the big picture and coordinating at the national level with the Karzai government, UNAMA, allied and partner ambassadors, and the multitude of international organizations engaged in the country, he was constantly pulled down to focus on the operational and tactical levels, especially as the conflict escalated.¹⁹ The surge in resources put further pressure on the command.

Leaders at the national, strategic (NATO), and coalition levels knew the command and control configuration needed to change. At the same time, consensus was emerging within NATO and the coalition partners “that we need to step up our support for Afghan National Security Forces” in the areas of training, equipping, and mentoring²⁰ because it

¹⁶ “Fewer dragons, more snakes,” *The Economist*, November 13, 2010.

¹⁷ Alexander Mattelaer, “How Afghanistan has Strengthened NATO,” *Survival*, Vol. 53, No. 6 (December 2011): 130.

¹⁸ Colonel (retired) George Woods, U.S. Army (served on the CSTC-A staff July-September 2008 and assisted with the establishment of U.S. Forces-Afghanistan; then served as the Senior Advisor to the Afghan Minister of Defense, NTM-A, ISAF, Kabul, Afghanistan, October 2008-July 2009), interview with author at Carlisle Barracks, PA, December 17, 2012

¹⁹ Three of the individuals interviewed talked about the pressures on the ISAF commander: Sherwood McGinnis, U.S. State Department, Colonel (retired) George Woods, U.S. Army, and Lieutenant Colonel Christopher Moretti, U.S. Army (served as the Deputy Chief of Targets in the J3 of the ISAF headquarters and then in IJC as it was being created, Kabul, Afghanistan, January-July 2009), interview with author at Carlisle Barracks, PA, January 14, 2014

²⁰ NATO, “Press conference by the NATO Spokesman James Appathurai after the Informal Working Lunch of NATO Defence Ministers, with Invitees,” February 19, 2009, http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohqs/opinions_51359.htm.

would ultimately be the vehicle for the security transition and the coalition's withdrawal. As a consequence, and after a series of discussions and consultations, political authorities agreed on a major organizational change: the coalition would establish two intermediate commands between the ISAF headquarters and the regional commands. The decision allowed a significant adaptation that improved the coalition's operational effectiveness.

The genesis for the first of the commands, the NATO Training Mission-Afghanistan (NTM-A), included discussions at the informal Defense Ministerial in Krakow, Poland in February 2009 and the subsequent Foreign Ministerial in Brussels in March. The allies formally announced their decision to create NTM-A at the April 2009 NATO Summit at Strasbourg-Kehl.²¹ The command would concentrate on the higher level training and mentoring of the ANA and ANP. The CSTC-A command with its ongoing activities would merge into it, bringing all ANSF training and mentoring activities and ministerial development and mentoring programs into one unified command.²² The merging was not inconsequential, for by 2009 CSTC-A was a huge organization with some 15,000 civilian and military personnel spread around the country in the headquarters staff and the regional support elements, in the basic training institutions in Kabul, in the army and police regional training facilities, in the hundreds of ETT/PMT and OMLT/POMLT teams, and in the ministries as mentors. CSTC-A was also not de-activated as NTM-A stood up due to U.S. national caveats. The United States provided the vast preponderance of funding for the ANSF which was used to: generate and integrate the Afghan forces; train, develop, equip, and sustain the forces; build and maintain infrastructure; and build ministerial capacity. By 2012, this was almost \$12 billion a year, therefore annual funding laws authorized by the U.S. Congress required that U.S. commanders maintain control and fiduciary responsibility, and this included management, oversight, and auditing of expenditures.²³ As such, NTM-A

²¹ Colonel (retired) George Woods, U.S. Army.

²² NATO Media Backgrounder, "NATO Training Mission-Afghanistan (NTM-A)," October, 2009, http://www.nato.int/nato_static_fl2014/assets/pdf/pdf_2009_10/20110310_091022-media-backgrounder-NTM-A.pdf.

²³ Lieutenant Colonel Jeffrey Dickerson, U.S. Army (served as the J3, CJTF-Phoenix, CSTC-A, Kabul, May-October 2009, then as the Chief of Future Operations, ANSF Development Assistance

and CSTC-A had to merge and its commander had to be a U.S. officer. This U.S. law/national caveat also meant the ISAF command structures remained complex.

The genesis of IJC followed a similar sequential process. Secretary Gates stated in his memoir that leaders in the Defense Department began considering the idea of creating a deputy ISAF commander with some sort of operational headquarters that would be in charge of the day-to-day fight in the spring of 2009.²⁴ The idea was discussed in Alliance forums and the defense ministers agreed in principle to create a new headquarters during a ministerial meeting in Brussels on June 12, 2009.²⁵ General McChrystal fleshed out the concept for the major change to the ISAF command structure in his comprehensive review. The new command, the ISAF Joint Command (IJC), would give the coalition an operational planning, command, and management capability it had previously lacked. Its focus on coordinating day-to-day combat operations and the civil-military activities of the PRTs would enable a more effective implementation of the comprehensive approach. The NAC approved the proposal on August 4, 2009.²⁶ With the decisions and command restructuring, OEF and ISAF operations almost completely merged together (special operations were still partially separate), however, as this chapter will later discuss, the IJC and NTM-A/CSTC-A overlapped in multiple ways.

Once overarching decisions were announced in NATO forums, the coalition staff had to figure out the nuts and bolts of implementation, which would include identifying the functions and compositions of the new commands, building infrastructure to support and house them, and moving people and equipment (the organizational changes required some re-shuffling of billets, that is, some ISAF headquarters billets were moved to IJC as the

Bureau, IJC, ISAF, Kabul, Afghanistan, October 2009-March 2010 – in both positions he worked assignment of army and police mentoring teams to the regional commands), interview with author at Carlisle Barracks, PA, April 5, 2013. Also, Colonel (retired) George Woods, U.S. Army, and Colonel Richard O'Donnell, U.S. Army (served as the Chief of Staff for the Deputy Commanding General-Support, NTM-A/CSTC-A, ISAF, Kabul, Afghanistan, June 2012-June 2013), interview with author at Carlisle Barracks, PA, March 4, 2014.

²⁴ Gates, *Duty*, 345-347.

²⁵ NATO, "Press conference by NATO Secretary General Jaap de Hoop Scheffer," June 12, 2009, http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/opinions_55630.htm.

²⁶ *Report on Progress toward Security and Stability in Afghanistan, October 2009* (Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Defense Report to Congress, 2009), 19.

command stood up). Overall, the organizational changes required a methodical planning and execution process by the coalition staff and it lasted some six months.²⁷ It was also a complex, time-consuming process because as with the other NATO multinational headquarters, there was a bidding and negotiation process at planning conferences at SHAPE to determine which nations would fill which positions.²⁸ IJC was activated on November 12, 2009 and NTM-A/CSTC-A was activated on November 21, 2009. The creation of the two intermediate commands marked the conclusion of a significant transformation in ISAF's operational-level command and control structures. From the humble beginnings of a 240-man ISAF headquarters in August 2003, the C2 structure was enormous by 2009: the ISAF headquarters staff had expanded to 2,200 billets,²⁹ IJC had 873 billets, and NTM-A had 1,028 billets.³⁰

The IJC and NTM-A activations included the implementation of one further change. Once the new commands were established, command and control of the ANA and ANP mentoring teams moved from CSTC-A into IJC.³¹ With this change, all forces deployed within the battle space of the regional commands came under the same chain of command. As a consequence, the combat operations, stability and reconstruction, and advising and mentoring activities could be better coordinated and executed. Previously the battle groups, PRTs, and advisers/mentors (ETT/PMT and OMLT/POMLT) had operated under separate chains of command. It was up to the individual leaders of the elements in the districts and provinces to coordinate amongst themselves to generate operational coherence. Sometimes they worked well together, but not infrequently they did not because their commanders were focused on different priorities and objectives.³² There were cases when the battle groups

²⁷ Lieutenant Colonel Christopher Moretti, U.S. Army, and Lieutenant Colonel Jeffrey Dickerson, U.S. Army.

²⁸ Colonel Douglas Campbell, U.S. Army (served as the Deputy J1, U.S. Forces Afghanistan, Kabul, Afghanistan, July 2010-July 2011), interview with author at Carlisle Barracks, PA, January 23, 2014.

²⁹ NATO, "ISAF Headquarters," <http://www.nato.int/isaf/structure/hq/index.html>.

³⁰ *Report on Progress Toward Security and Stability in Afghanistan, April 2010*, 13-14.

³¹ Lieutenant Colonel Jeffrey Dickerson, U.S. Army.

³² The NGOs operating across the country were not included in this consolidation. Very often they pursued their development projects independently and did not inform or coordinate their activities with the regional commands or the military forces in their regions. Lieutenant Colonel Mark Holler, U.S. Army; Colonel Stephen Maranian, U.S. Army; Lieutenant Colonel Brent Grometer, U.S. Air

were not even aware they had PRTs or mentoring teams operating in their areas.³³ This had degraded the coalition's ability to achieve its security, development, and governance goals and it meant personalities were extremely important. More seriously, the re-alignment resulted from learning the hard way. One of the officers interviewed witnessed the frustration of the ISAF and IJC commanders after an ETT was ambushed with its *kandak* in RC-East, an event that was not unprecedented as the violence increased. The coalition's battle space owner had not been aware of the Afghan operation and the question was asked "How the heck does this happen?" The generals were adamant that "We've got to clean this battlefield up . . . we've got to get everybody nested. We've got to have some unity of command here, so if you live and work and operate in this battle space, you answer to that battle space owner, you work for him." Once the ANSF mentoring teams moved, CJTF Phoenix and CJTF Police de-activated.³⁴ As OEF and ISAF more fully merged in November 2009, there was little drama because, despite assertions for years that the missions were separate and distinct, they had been slowly converging since 2003. At this point, there was more complete unity of command and much better unity of effort.

The major organizational changes and command re-alignment were accompanied by four complementary surges. The surges came in waves: U.S. forces substantially increased (2009-2010); forty of the allies and partners committed to increase their forces by 9,700 (the increases arrived 2010-2012),³⁵ the Pakistani government substantially increased the scale and scope of military operations in the NWFP and FATA, putting pressure on the insurgent sanctuaries (2009-2014), and ISAF greatly increased the scale and scope of ANSF

Force (served as the commander of a Provincial Reconstruction Team, Nangarhar Province, Regional Command-East, ISAF, Afghanistan, February-November 2010), interview with author at Carlisle Barracks, PA, April 9, 2013; and Michael J. Forsyth, "Tempering Expectations in Afghanistan: Reflections From A Year in Combat" (unpublished manuscript, in the author's possession, June, 2011), 261-262, 276, 297, 366.

³³ Colonel William Butler, U.S. Army and Lieutenant Colonel Jeffrey Dickerson, U.S. Army.

³⁴ Lieutenant Colonel Jeffrey Dickerson, U.S. Army.

³⁵ *Report on Progress Toward Security and Stability in Afghanistan, November 2010* (Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Defense Report to Congress, 2010), 14. A number of countries made substantial increases. France, Italy, Poland, Romania, and Turkey sent about 1,000 additional troops each. Australia, Germany, Spain, and the UK sent about 500 additional troops each. "International Security Assistance Force," ISAF Placemats, October 1, 2009 to December 3, 2012, <http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natolive/107995.htm>. Also, Colonel Piotr Bieniek, Polish Army.

development (2010-2013). Furthermore, ISAF's main effort shifted from combat and COIN operations (which were the focus through 2010) to NTM-A's training, mentoring, and advising mission, which became ISAF's main effort in 2011. The four surges were mutually dependent and they built on each other. In effect, the massive increases in coalition military forces were only temporary and were meant to beat back the Taliban momentum and reduce the insurgency as much as possible in order to create time and space for the surge in ANSF training and development. As the surge forces started drawing down, between 2012 and 2013, the idea was ANSF would step into the gap and take over security responsibility. As the ANSF increasingly took over security, ISAF could gradually withdraw.

President Obama had called for a "dramatic increase in the U.S. civilian effort" in his Afghan strategy speech in March 2009, but this civilian surge never materialized. Even though commanders in the field "pleaded" for more civilian expertise, the State Department and other federal agencies were incapable of fielding more than a trickle of civilian experts. While the administration examined every military move under a microscope, "no comparable attention was paid to the civilian side,"³⁶ which allowed the non-defense agencies to shirk their responsibilities in the governance and economic areas. By November 2010, the number of non-defense department civilians deployed in Afghanistan topped out at about 1,100, equating to 1% of the U.S. military commitment.³⁷ This also ensured continued military involvement in the non-military lines of effort.

General McChrystal's comments on the dire situation were not under-statements and ISAF assessed there was a new insurgent strategy by 2009-2010. Based on the loose structure of the QST and the regional *shuras*, and the autonomy given to the various insurgent elements, the Taliban coalition initiated a loosely coordinated two-pronged approach. Forces comprised primarily of the Taliban pushed from the south towards Kandahar, while primarily Haqqani and Hekmatyar forces pushed from the east towards Kabul. Both groups concentrated on attacking coalition and ANSF forces. Their goal was

³⁶ Gates, *Duty*, 343, 347-348, 476.

³⁷ *Report on Progress Toward Security and Stability in Afghanistan, November 2010*, 15.

“to inflict enough pain on the coalition to force public opinion in Europe and North America to demand a withdrawal. Once the coalition [was] gone, they figure[d] the government of Afghanistan [would] fall like rotten fruit.”³⁸ The coalition faced a determined opponent.

Due to General McChrystal’s assessment of the deteriorating situation, he modified ISAF’s operational approach. The organizational changes and command re-alignment improved the coalition’s operational capabilities and gave it, for the first time, the organizational capacity to develop and implement a truly coordinated and adequately resourced comprehensive approach. The newly established IJC developed an overarching national civil-military campaign plan, called *Operation Omid* (Dari for “hope”), that was developed and executed in partnership with relevant ministries in the Afghan government (the security, governance, and development ministries). It was approved by JFC Brunssum and updated annually.³⁹ While the RC commanders still prepared and executed operations within their regions, they had to be approved by IJC and in accordance with the overall campaign plan. Consequently, the entire ISAF coalition could finally prosecute more effective COIN operations in partnership with the ANSF and the Afghan government. In reality, ISAF implemented the clear-hold-build approach (modified in each region to account for local conditions) that had been attempted in previous years, but this time it finally had sufficient forces (both coalition and ANSF) to clear and hold terrain, and thus secure the population, which established a more stable foundation for governance and economic development activities. It also minimized the Taliban coalition’s ability to exploit the seams between the regional commands.

The coalition also implemented across the regional commands an operating procedure that had been pioneered in 2007 in RC-East. That year, the battle group commander in Khowst had dispersed his troops in small outposts, called Force Protection

³⁸ Max Boot, Frederick W. Kagan, and Kimberly Kagan, “Yes, We Can: In the ‘graveyard of empires,’ we are fighting a war we can win,” *The Weekly Standard*, Vol. 14, No. 26 (March 23, 2009): 16. Also, *Report on Progress Toward Security and Stability in Afghanistan, November 2010*, 41-42.

³⁹ Colonel (retired) Richard Lacquement, U.S. Army (served as the liaison to the Afghan Independent Directorate of Local Governance (IDLG) as part of the Ministerial Outreach Team, IJC, ISAF, Kabul, Afghanistan, June 2010-July 2011), interview with author at Carlisle Barracks, PA, January 30, 2014.

Facilities, throughout the province and in each of the district centers where they lived among the people. This enabled them to easily and directly mentor and protect local officials and the ANP, operate with the ANA, and coordinate PRT activities. The approach was very effective. The enduring presence created a sense of security among the population that “fostered commerce and civil society,” and in that year districts that were pro-government increased from 22 to 58 (out of a total of 86).⁴⁰ General McChrystal called it “embedded partnering.” Not only were ISAF forces dispersed among the population in key areas, but coalition and ANSF forces were also co-located and they operated in partnership. According to General McChrystal, the intent was they “would train, eat, bunk, plan, patrol, fight, celebrate, and mourn together.”⁴¹ This approach produced a sense of security among communities that had not existed previously.

In addition, General McChrystal resuscitated the ink-spot approach that General Richards had pioneered in 2006. The IJC identified 80 “key terrain” districts which were focal points for concentrated security, development, and governance activities. They included all the major population centers, major transit areas, and key roads. Security operations in the districts were followed by a new initiative, the District Delivery Program. Coalition forces coordinated with the district leaders, provincial governors, and relevant government ministers to establish government services and launch development projects.⁴²

Coalition operations were supported by more strategic enablers. The increased material resources improved operational capability. During the height of the conflict in Iraq, the United States had moved strategic assets, such as intelligence capabilities and helicopters, out of Afghanistan to support *Operation Iraqi Freedom* (OIF).⁴³ With the success of the U.S. surge in Iraq in 2007, and subsequent withdrawal of forces from Iraq under Presidents Bush and Obama, the U.S. not only had more military forces available for

⁴⁰ Ann Marlowe, “A Counterinsurgency Grows in Khost: An unheralded U.S. success in Afghanistan,” *The Weekly Standard*, Vol. 13, No. 34 (May 19, 2008): 19-21.

⁴¹ McChrystal, *My Share of the Task*, 347, 376; and Gates, *Duty*, 355.

⁴² Colonel (retired) Richard Lacquement, U.S. Army.

⁴³ Author interview at Carlisle Barracks, PA with Officer D (who served in special operations in Afghanistan), November 6, 2013; and Colonel (retired) George Woods, U.S. Army.

its troop surges in Afghanistan, but it also moved strategic assets back, in particular intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance (ISR) assets and rotary aircraft.⁴⁴ Defense Secretary Gates had become concerned about the situation in Afghanistan in 2007 and he not only directed the Department of Defense and Combatant Commands to shift critical ISR assets, particularly drones, to CENTCOM, but he also succeeded in acquiring new funding (some \$2.6 billion) to increase desperately needed additional capabilities, such as: information processing hardware, linguists and analysts, ground sensors, and reconnaissance aircraft.⁴⁵ The additional capabilities started arriving by 2008. They gave the coalition the intelligence enablers it needed to implement more effective COIN operations and reduce civilian casualties.

In 2009, the most volatile regions continued to be the south and east. Even though insurgent attacks generally increased across the country, particularly in the run up to the August presidential election, the north, center, and west remained relatively more secure.⁴⁶ The forces in RC-East had also produced some counter-insurgency successes in 2007 and 2008, making the region relatively more stable than the south. For example, by 2009, Jalalabad, in Nangarhar Province, was booming economically and violence levels were low enough for the ANSF to assume responsibility for security.⁴⁷ Due to this “permissive environment” the PRT surged its development activities and by 2010 it was managing \$60 million in projects.⁴⁸ Khowst Province had also seen improvement. U.S. Ambassador Neumann observed when he visited Khowst in 2005 that it was regularly rocketed.⁴⁹ Secretary Gates noted improvements when he visited the area in December 2007, calling the

⁴⁴ A number of the officers interviewed remarked on the noticeable increase in resources: Officer D; Author interview at Carlisle Barracks, PA with Officer E (who served in the Regional Command-North region in Afghanistan), January 15, 2014; Colonel Piotr Bieniek, Polish Army; Lieutenant Colonel Peter Whalen, U.S. Army (served as Chief, Intelligence Collection Management, J2, IJC, ISAF, Kabul, Afghanistan, January-July 2011), interview with author at Carlisle Barracks, PA, December 27, 2013.

⁴⁵ Gates, *Duty*, 127, 129, 130, 132, 133, 445.

⁴⁶ *Report on Progress toward Security and Stability in Afghanistan*, October 2009, 6, 12.

⁴⁷ Boot, Kagan, and Kagan, “Yes, We Can,” 14-15.

⁴⁸ Lieutenant Colonel Brent Grometer, U.S. Air Force.

⁴⁹ Neumann, *The Other War*, 15.

civilian-military efforts “a model” of genuinely comprehensive counter-insurgency.⁵⁰ By the end of 2008, Khowst was so secure and had made such economic and civil progress that conditions were better than the neighboring FATA regions and refugees were leaving Pakistan to take advantage of the new opportunities in Afghanistan.⁵¹ One of the officers interviewed described in overall terms the difference between RC-South and RC-East in 2009, he said, “For us, RC-South as it was named was much more kinetic than any of the RC’s. RC-East was second, but there was a significant difference in the level.”⁵²

General McChrystal, and his successor General David Petraeus, therefore concentrated ISAF’s main effort towards operations in the south – first in Helmand, then in Kandahar. Operationally, this meant RC-South was the priority for theatre-level resources, including intelligence, ISR, and lethal and non-lethal fire support.⁵³ As U.S. surge forces arrived in country in 2009, British and Canadian-led forces conducted a series of operations in Helmand and Kandahar to prepare the ground.⁵⁴ However, the new coordinated civilian-military campaign approach was not initiated until RC-South launched *Operation Moshtarak* (Dari for “together”) which focused on the region around Marjah and Nad Ali in Helmand.⁵⁵ The operation was significant orders of magnitude larger than every previous ISAF effort; it included 15,000 forces, with the ANA and ANP integrated as full partners, as well as British, Canadian, Danish, Estonian, and U.S. troops.⁵⁶ Innovations in operating procedures included an initial “shaping” phase (late 2009-February 2010) when *shuras* were held to inform the population and local leaders about the upcoming operation and assure them the coalition would stay in the area to consolidate security. When combat operations,

⁵⁰ Gates, *Duty*, 211.

⁵¹ Ann Marlowe, “Policing Afghanistan: Too few good men and too many bad ones make for a grueling, uphill struggle,” *The Weekly Standard*, Vol. 14, No. 14 (December 22, 2008): 25-26.

⁵² Lieutenant Colonel Christopher Moretti, U.S. Army.

⁵³ Lieutenant Colonel Peter Whalen, U.S. Army and Lieutenant Colonel Christopher Moretti, U.S. Army.

⁵⁴ Martin, *An Intimate War*, 186-192. Richard Roy, “With Enough Nails: Canadian COIN in Kandahar,” in Hans-Georg Ehrhart, Sven Bernhard Gareis, and Charles Pentland, eds., *Afghanistan in the Balance: Counterinsurgency, Comprehensive Approach, and Political Order* (Montreal & Kingston: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 2012), 44-46.

⁵⁵ Colonel Robbie Boyd, British Army. *Report on Progress Toward Security and Stability in Afghanistan*, April 2010, 29-30.

⁵⁶ News Release, ISAF Joint Command-Afghanistan, “Operation Moshtarak,” February 13, 2010, <http://www.nato.int/isaf>.

the “clearing” phase, began in February 2010, supporting fires were strictly controlled to avoid damaging civilian infrastructure and killing civilians.⁵⁷ Once the major population centers were largely secured, in the spring, the District Delivery Program (DDP) was launched.⁵⁸ ISAF understood consolidating successes would take time, and its increased resources meant it was ready for the Taliban resistance it encountered. Over the rest of the year, and through a series of complex engagements, it slowly achieved substantial results.⁵⁹ For example, clearing Marjah meant it could no longer serve as “a Taliban sanctuary, command-and-control node, and staging area.”⁶⁰ By December, Marjah was “transformed . . . with new schools and a bustling market.”⁶¹ The “dramatic security progress” increased in 2011 as “COIN operations expanded gains in central and southern Helmand Province.”⁶² One observer remarked in October, “Marjah, once the epicenter of violence in Afghanistan, had turned remarkably peaceful.”⁶³ Lashkar Gar and Nad Ali underwent a similar transformation; an officer who deployed there in 2009-2010 noted the dramatic improvement in economic activity in Lashkar Gar. He stated when his unit first arrived “the streets were empty” but by the time it left, 18 months later, in November 2010, “the market was 4,000-5,000 people every day . . . the police wanted to be in Lashkar Gar because they had everything they needed. You could buy anything you want . . . It’s an urban area and it’s growing and it was secure.”⁶⁴ As a consequence, President Karzai announced in November 2011 that the area would transition to Afghan security responsibility during the second transition phase⁶⁵ which occurred in 2012 as the U.S. Marine surge forces withdrew.

⁵⁷ McChrystal, *My Share of the Task*, 363-369, 375.

⁵⁸ Colonel (retired) Richard Lacquement, U.S. Army.

⁵⁹ Colonel Robbie Boyd, British Army. *Report on Progress Toward Security and Stability in Afghanistan*, April 2010, 30.

⁶⁰ Frederick W. Kagan and Kimberly Kagan, “A Winnable War,” *The Weekly Standard*, Vol. 15, No. 40 (July 5, 2010), <http://www.weeklystandard.com>.

⁶¹ “The war in Afghanistan: Still pouring,” *The Economist*, December 18, 2010.

⁶² *Report on Progress Toward Security and Stability in Afghanistan, October 2011* (Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Defense Report to Congress, 2011), 3.

⁶³ Max Boot, *Invisible Armies: An Epic History of Guerilla Warfare from Ancient Times to the Present* (New York: Liveright Publishing Corporation, 2013), 554.

⁶⁴ Colonel Robbie Boyd, British Army.

⁶⁵ NATO, “Inteqal: Transition to Afghan Lead,” http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natolive/topics_87183.htm.

The surge in forces and material resources meant the coalition could turn to Kandahar, even as *Operation Moshtarak* continued, which was a vast improvement in the coalition's organizational capacity. However the huge scale and complexity of operations also generated an additional organizational change. The span of control for the RC-South commander had become huge by early June 2010; he commanded some 65,000 troops whereas RC-East had 32,000 troops, RC-North had 8,000 troops, RC-West had 6,000 troops and RC-Capital had 5,000.⁶⁶ Therefore, after receiving NAC approval on May 21, 2010, ISAF created RC-Southwest in June.⁶⁷ It split Helmand Province and Nimroz Province from RC-South to create the new RC and it also incorporated three districts from RC-West's Farah Province into it.⁶⁸ The new regional command took over *Moshtarak* operations, allowing RC-South to concentrate on *Operation Hamkari* (Dari for "cooperation") which it had initiated in April 2010.

The new operation was in effect an application of the ink-spot concept for it focused on securing Kandahar City and its environs and it was intended to connect the key districts and major population centers of Helmand to Kandahar, which lay along the ring road, Highway 1.⁶⁹ The "shaping" phase of the operation, April-August 2010, was a little longer than *Moshtarak* had been, because RC-South applied a number of lessons learned from the earlier operation⁷⁰ and it invested more time in building support for the operation among local leaders and the population.⁷¹ The "clearing" phase of *Operation Hamkari* began in September, and it involved some 7,000 troops. More significantly, for the first time Afghan forces outnumbered ISAF forces. Afghans also took the lead in some areas, which focused on Kandahar City and the districts to its west, Zhari, Panjawi, and Arghandab.⁷² By

⁶⁶ "International Security Assistance Force," ISAF Placemat, June 7, 2010, <http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natolive/107995.htm>.

⁶⁷ NATO, "NATO agrees to split Regional Command South, Afghanistan," May 21, 2010, http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/news_63806.htm

⁶⁸ *Report on Progress Toward Security and Stability in Afghanistan*, November 2010, 47.

⁶⁹ McChrystal, *My Share of the Task*, 377.

⁷⁰ Robert M. Cassidy, *War, Will, and Warlords: Counterinsurgency in Afghanistan and Pakistan, 2001-2011* (Washington, DC: Marine Corps University Press, 2011), 122.

⁷¹ Kagan and Kagan, "A Winnable War."

⁷² Lynne O'Donnell, "Petraeus says Taliban making 'overtures' for peace," *Agence France Presse*, September 28, 2010.

December 2010, an anonymous Taliban commander admitted, “the [Afghan] government has the upper hand now” in Kandahar and “the local people are not willingly cooperating with us.”⁷³ A year later, the coalition continued to solidify its gains. The Taliban’s campaign in 2011 to regain lost safe havens in Helmand and Kandahar and reassert dominance in Khowst, Paktika, and Paktia failed. Furthermore, RC-South noted improvements in Afghan governance capacity at district and provincial levels and as a result there was “increased overt popular support” for the government across Kandahar, Uruzgan, and Zabul.⁷⁴ Through 2012, despite Taliban efforts to regain their lost territories, the security gains achieved in the Helmand and Kandahar provinces were sustained. The security situation in the other regional commands also improved, in some cases dramatically, as they also implemented more fully coordinated civilian-military operations.⁷⁵ In fact, by mid-2012, large portions of RC-North, RC-West, and RC-Southwest had transitioned to the ANSF’s security responsibility, about half of RC-East was in transition, and in RC-South the entire Uruzgan Province and portions of Zabul and Kandahar were in transition.

To complement the coordinated civil-military campaign, ISAF increased special forces operations across the country, 2009-2011, as it reorganized their command and control structures. Most importantly, the ISAF commander was finally given operational control of CJSOTF-A in the spring of 2010 (up until that point, CENTCOM had retained operational control).⁷⁶ General McChrystal also concurrently stood up a new organizational element, ISAF SOF. The creation of this staff element formalized what had previously been an informal coordination link between liaison officers from NATO SOF task forces in the regions and the ISAF command group.⁷⁷ ISAF SOF was a command, control, and

⁷³ Max Boot, “Surge Protector,” *The Weekly Standard*, Vol. 16, No. 15 (December 27, 2010), <http://www.weeklystandard.com>.

⁷⁴ *Report on Progress Toward Security and Stability in Afghanistan, October 2011*, 60, 63-64.

⁷⁵ *Report on Progress Toward Security and Stability in Afghanistan, April 2012* (Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Defense Report to Congress, 2012), 3-4 and *Report on Progress Toward Security and Stability in Afghanistan, December 2012* (Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Defense Report to Congress, 2012), 3-4.

⁷⁶ Gates, *Duty*, 478. McChrystal, *My Share of the Task*, 343, 366. CJSOTF-A was subsumed into a larger combined headquarters called the Combined Forces Special Operations Component Command-Afghanistan (CFSOCC-A).

⁷⁷ Officer E.

coordination element for the NATO and partner SOF forces who had long been operating in the country but were not part of CJSOTF-A. It was supported by the NATO Special Operations Headquarters (NSHQ) at SHAPE, which provided SOF policy, doctrine, capabilities, standards, training, and education support for all NATO SOF operations.⁷⁸ This operational consolidation meant all military operations and missions were finally folded into ISAF control and it greatly enhanced the coalition's unity of effort.

ISAF's surge in special operations included precision strikes against insurgent leadership. It was assessed this would unbalance the insurgent coalition, degrade its capabilities, and undermine the enemy's confidence, particularly as the coalition got ready to launch *Moshtarak* and *Hamkari*. General McChrystal then expanded the special operation missions by initiating village stability operations in the spring of 2010. This bottom-up initiative embedded 12-man teams into remote rural villages where the ANSF and ISAF presence was limited. They were a mechanism to connect district and provincial leaders, as well as the PRTs, to remote areas. The initiative started with five teams and it expanded quickly. By October 2011, the initiative had 6,000 troops engaged in 103 locations across the country. The initiative was considered highly effective.⁷⁹ The precision strike operations were also successful in eroding the insurgent leadership. By early 2011, General Petraeus noted the "enormous losses" suffered among Taliban and Haqqani mid-level leaders which appeared to generate "unprecedented discord among members of the Quetta Shura."⁸⁰ Intelligence sources also found some Taliban commanders were afraid to keep fighting.⁸¹ Later in the year, ISAF commanders assessed the insurgents could no longer "mount coordinated or complex attacks," so they resorted to horrific high profile attacks, such as the September Haqqani attack in Kabul, when the group rocketed ISAF headquarters, the U.S.

⁷⁸ The NSHQ originated from the transformation initiatives announced at the Riga Summit in 2006. It was initially called the NATO SOF Coordination Center when it was formally established in 2007. Commander Michelle Winegardner, U.S. Navy (served as Director, J4, NATO SOF Coordination Center, SHAPE, Mons, Belgium, December 2006-July 2009; and as the Support Operations Officer for the Afghan National Army in CJ4, NTM-A/CSTC-A, ISAF, Kabul, Afghanistan, November 2010-July 2011), interview with author at Carlisle Barracks, PA, May 2, 2013.

⁷⁹ *Report on Progress Toward Security and Stability in Afghanistan, October 2011*, 67.

⁸⁰ "Afghanistan: An orchard of ills," *The Economist*, January 29, 2011.

⁸¹ "Glimmers of hope," *The Economist*, May 14, 2011.

Embassy, and Afghan government buildings.⁸² However, General Petraeus' successor, General John Allen, noted that every one of the high profile attacks that year were handled by an increasingly capable ANSF "which responded promptly and courageously and effectively."⁸³

Finally, the operational-level organizational changes and re-structuring, and the shift in operational approach, generated organizational changes and new operating procedures within the regional command headquarters. According to an officer deployed in RC-North, after the IJC creation, "a complete new structure [was] established in all the regional commands . . . the staff were completely newly arranged, in order to integrate better the coordination with IJC." The reorganization included the establishment of new staff elements, the most significant of which was the Forward Planning Cell which was a sub-division of the Operations Department. The staff element's primary responsibility reflected the coalition's increasing emphasis on partnership with Afghan forces with a view to eventually putting Afghans in the lead of security operations. The cell acted as a bridge that linked the operational planning efforts of the RC staff with the ANSF; it coordinated directly with ANA corps and brigade commanders, as well as ANP elements, to ensure the development of combined operational plans that synchronized ANSF activities with coalition battle groups and PRTs operating on the ground.⁸⁴ This staff element facilitated the development and execution of combined Afghan-coalition operations and then pushed the Afghans into the lead.

Another regional command innovation was less effective. In addition to the traditional departments found in an operational headquarters – personnel, intelligence, operations, logistics, communications – a new department was created in 2011, the Stability Department. Its mission and function was to coordinate with all the civil partners operating in the region – UNAMA and other UN organizations, USAID and other national foreign aid

⁸² "Taliban attacks in Afghanistan: On the front line," *The Economist*, September 17, 2011; and "What comes next," *The Economist*, December 3, 2011.

⁸³ NATO, "Interview with General John R. Allen, Commander ISAF," September 2, 2011, http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/opinions_77543.htm.

⁸⁴ Officer E.

organizations, the Red Cross and other NGOs, etc. The idea was to better synchronize the RC's COIN operations with the development activities of civil partners, because coalition forces assessed the center of gravity for operational success in Afghanistan was civil development.⁸⁵ Better RC coordination would also facilitate the security transition process and coalition withdrawal. However, the Stability Departments were never adequately resourced. According to the officer who led this department in RC-North, he had a staff of 20 multinational personnel, none of whom were "specialists in civil affairs," while the Operations Department had 200 staff assigned.⁸⁶ Furthermore, many NGOs were extremely wary of contact with coalition forces which meant coordination was always inconsistent and haphazard.

Sufficient security gains had been achieved by November 2010 that the allies announced at the NATO Lisbon Summit their decision "to stay the course" with their comprehensive approach and they announced their intention to transition security responsibility to the ANSF and conclude the ISAF mission by December 2014.⁸⁷ In addition, they announced NATO would remain engaged in Afghanistan after 2014, and as such signed a "Declaration on an Enduring Partnership" with the Afghan government.⁸⁸ The allies also announced a new strategic concept for NATO, which acknowledged that counter-insurgency, along with stabilization and reconstruction, were enduring missions.⁸⁹ This was a validation of the Alliance's expanded strategic culture for it formally incorporated and institutionalized what ISAF had been doing for more than four years. Overall, it seemed the increase in resources, organizational changes, and revised operational approach had produced sufficient operational gains to sustain national political will and thus operational

⁸⁵ Colonel Uwe Hartmann, German Army.

⁸⁶ Ibid.

⁸⁷ "NATO after the summit: Harmony – for now," *The Economist*, November 27, 2010. According to Defense Secretary Gates, President Karzai had first suggested the 2014 end date for ISAF's combat operations after his 2009 re-inauguration. President Obama "embraced" the proposal and included it in his December 2009 speech. The proposal then went to NATO for formal consideration. Gates, *Duty*, 498.

⁸⁸ NATO Media Backgrounder, "Afghanistan and NATO's Enduring Partnership," April 2011, <http://www.isaf.nato.int>.

⁸⁹ NATO, "Press conference by NATO Secretary General Anders Fogh Rasmussen at the Lisbon Summit of Heads of State and Government," November 19, 2010, http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natolive/opinions_68927.htm.

commitment. This in turn enabled the start of the security transition in 2011 as well as the shift in ISAF's main effort from combat operations to NTM-A's training and mentoring initiatives.

The high point of the violence was the summer of 2010. It was not clear to the coalition at the time, but that year was also a tipping point in the conflict, when the correlation of forces began to shift to the side of ISAF. In any event, 2008-2010 was a very tough period, when coalition fighting and fatalities greatly increased. The pressure of the conflict could have frayed cohesion but the allies and partners stay engaged, even though it was "a time of tumbling European defence spending" due to the global financial crisis.⁹⁰ More surprisingly, the ISAF coalition increased from 40 members to 48. The interaction of the analytical framework's two drivers continued to produce cohesion. Political will provided resources and substantial organizational changes and adaptations in operating procedures generated concrete operational successes.

The clearest demonstrations of the intent to stay engaged, and thus enduring political will, were the decisions to surge military forces and material resources. The American troop increase, in particular, and the U.S. assumption of a leadership role helped hold the coalition together at a critical time. In effect, continued U.S. engagement in Afghanistan and the massive American troop increase "pulled along" the other members and influenced the decisions of allies to stay and to increase their forces. Secretary Gates' recounting of the Obama administration's deliberations suggests there was no distinction between domestic and alliance politics for the administration. While the president and his advisors framed their decisions within a domestic politics context, and within the context of a struggle between the military bureaucracy (which was distrusted) and the new administration, once their decisions were made they informed NATO and assumed the Alliance would go along with any shift in approach.⁹¹ The allies did. Furthermore, the U.S. position influenced the non-NATO partners, which numbered 15 by 2010 but later

⁹⁰ "Fewer dragons, more snakes."

⁹¹ Gates, *Duty*, 337, 338, 349, 350.

increased. For example, Bosnia-Herzegovina and El Salvador joined the coalition in 2011; they respectively provided troops to guard a base in Helmand and trainers for NTM-A.

Political will among the allies and partners was based on the belief that an ISAF failure or precipitous withdrawal from Afghanistan would be catastrophic for the Alliance. It would be taken by al Qaeda and other jihadist groups as a strategic victory on par with the Soviet-Afghan war because it would be not only another defeat of a superpower, but of the entire international community. There was also a belief it would result in a surge of terrorist camps and training in the region, which would destabilize Afghanistan and undermine Pakistan.⁹² But this was only one strategic reason for the enduring political will. For some countries, joining and staying was simple, for example, according to a Hungarian officer deployed in RC-North, for Hungary it was all about Alliance solidarity - literally “together in and together out.”⁹³ For other countries, over time the national reasons for staying became multiple and layered over each other. New Zealand joined the coalition in 2001 out of solidarity with the United States after 9/11 and in the face of a shared jihadist threat. Its commitment then endured for humanitarian reasons; the reconstruction efforts of its PRT in Bamiyan helped the Afghan people. A desire to strengthen the New Zealand-U.S. relationship became the third reason for the country’s contribution, after a change in government.⁹⁴ Italian contributions were initially based on a desire to play a larger role on the world stage and as an unstated “pay-back” for allied assistance in stabilizing the Balkans.⁹⁵ However, honoring the agreements made at NATO also mattered for Italy, therefore once it promised to support ISAF, the government was determined it would see it through until NATO decided to end the mission and withdraw.⁹⁶ Germany initially joined coalition operations in Afghanistan due to sympathy for the United States and a desire to

⁹² “After McChrystal,” *The Economist*, June 26, 2010; and Gates, *Duty*, 373-374, 496.

⁹³ Colonel Romulusz Ruszin, Hungarian Army (served as the commander of a Provincial Reconstruction Team, Baghlan Province, Regional Command-North, ISAF, Afghanistan, August 2011-March 2012), interview with author at Carlisle Barracks, PA, February 10, 2014.

⁹⁴ Lieutenant Colonel Hugh McAslan, New Zealand Army.

⁹⁵ Gary J. Schmitt, “Italian Hard Power: Ambitions and Fiscal Realities,” *AEI National Security Outlook*, No. 3 (November 2012): 9.

⁹⁶ Colonel Alberto Vezzoli, Italian Army.

help.⁹⁷ The government also invoked Alliance solidarity and loyalty to allies to justify its contribution. It subsequently cited moral reasons for its involvement – it was fighting for democracy and human rights.⁹⁸ After the Iraq intervention, Germany increased its commitment to Afghanistan to repair relations with the United States and to demonstrate to its other allies it was still a reliable partner.⁹⁹ As the security situation deteriorated, it stayed because it could not abandon a mission that was incomplete.¹⁰⁰ It wanted to complete the mission successfully, particularly since it wanted NATO as a security institution to be successful. Finally, Germany remained committed to Afghanistan out of a sense of obligation and responsibility to the 17 contributing nations that depended on it as the lead nation for RC-North.¹⁰¹ National reasons for contributions seemed to develop into a complex mosaic based on intertwined domestic and alliance politics.

Collective political will was expressed in the Alliance's Lisbon Summit declaration, for there was continuing consensus among the allies that ISAF needed to continue to fight.¹⁰² Non-NATO partners also continued to express their commitment, for example, Australia's Prime Minister, Julia Gillard, visited Afghanistan shortly after assuming office and she assured President Karzai her country would continue to support the ISAF mission.¹⁰³ However, the contributing nations also started to temper their statements; they had no desire to stay indefinitely. Danish Prime Minister Lars Rasmussen stated during a visit to his troops that "We are determined to end our mission . . . But we must not get so carried away that all will slip between our hands."¹⁰⁴ Secretary General Rasmussen reflected the allied view when he stated at a NATO press conference in the summer of 2010 that "Allies and partners will stay committed as long as it takes to finish the job. Obviously, that

⁹⁷ Colonel Uwe Hartmann, German Army.

⁹⁸ "Merkel's Caution: Berlin Reverts to Old Timidity on Military Missions," *Spiegel Online*, March 26, 2013.

⁹⁹ Colonel Uwe Hartmann, German Army.

¹⁰⁰ Lieutenant Colonel Jürgen Prandtner, German Army (served as the commander of battle group battalion in Regional Command-Capital, ISAF, Kabul, Afghanistan, June-December 2007), interview with author at Carlisle Barracks, PA, January 14, 2014.

¹⁰¹ Colonel Uwe Hartmann, German Army.

¹⁰² "NATO after the summit: Harmony – for now."

¹⁰³ "Australian PM Visits Afghanistan," *RFE/RL*, October 3, 2010.

¹⁰⁴ "Danish prime minister in surprise visit to Afghanistan," *Agence France Presse*, September 26, 2010.

does not mean forever.”¹⁰⁵ The allies and partners were starting to think about withdrawal, but they did not want to throw away the hard won gains. The transition plan gave them a roadmap for ending the mission.

National political will was reinforced by organizational capacity changes within NATO, ISAF, and national militaries. The hard fighting was taken as an opportunity for learning and adjustment – in organizational structures which affected the command and control of ISAF forces, in mission execution and operating procedures, in doctrine and training, and in national force structures. For example, at the strategic level NATO finally published a COIN doctrine in February 2011¹⁰⁶ and incorporated COIN operations into its training institutions and programs, such as the mission rehearsal exercises at the NATO training facilities in Stavanger, Norway and Bydgoszcz, Poland.¹⁰⁷ The Alliance also refined the forums that allowed non-NATO contributing nations to share information, be more involved in “policy-shaping,” and have their voices heard in decision-making.¹⁰⁸ At the operational level, ISAF commanders continually assessed and tinkered with the command structures. They never stopped trying to create a more functional command and control configuration, but the evolutions literally took months and years because major changes required NATO and national government approval. There was also a down side to the constant changes: it meant constant disruption.

In general, ISAF’s operational expansion impelled many allies and partners to adjust their equipment and training programs and as such it accelerated the reform of Cold War legacy forces into expeditionary formations.¹⁰⁹ For a number of countries, reform was slow and it occurred in the face of a difficult fiscal environment. For example, Italy

¹⁰⁵ Jim Garamone, “Petraeus calls for unity of purpose, effort crucial,” *JBAD Journal*, Vol. 1, No. 2 (July 2010): 2.

¹⁰⁶ The document was under development for a number of years and was officially published as AJP-3.4.4, *Allied Joint Doctrine for Counterinsurgency (COIN)*, <http://info.publicintelligence.net/NATO-Counterinsurgency.pdf>.

¹⁰⁷ Joint Warfare Center, “ISAF,” June 29, 2015, <http://www.jwc.nato.int/isaf>.

¹⁰⁸ Michito Tsuruoka, “Asia, NATO and its partners: complicated relationships?” *NATO Review* (2009), <http://www.nato.int/docu/review/2009/Asia/EN/index.htm>.

¹⁰⁹ Michael Ruhle, “NATO ten years after: learning the lessons,” *NATO Review* (September 2011), <http://www.nato.int/docu/review/2011/11-september/EN/index.htm>.

developed a more capable and professional military only by reducing its size and slowing modernization.¹¹⁰ Canada wasted no time after 2006 in gathering lessons learned from Kandahar and making adjustments in training and operational practices. It published its own COIN manual in 2008 and implemented a reformed COIN approach in 2009.¹¹¹ German reform efforts were slower because of the more stable conditions in RC-North, however repeated attacks by insurgents in Kunduz after 2006 induced change. As one officer stated, “We recognized that we had a lot of deficiencies in terms of capabilities and some doctrinal elements . . . the overall question was really how to improve.” The German army not only updated officer training but in 2010 it also deployed two full battle groups to Mazar-e-Sharif and Kunduz. Their offensive operations against insurgents were supported by about 5,000 U.S. surge forces and additional enablers (intelligence capabilities, MEDEVAC, and combat air support).¹¹² German forces later expanded their offensive operations to Feyzabad and Baghlan.¹¹³ For historical reasons, the German Army was hesitant to publicly utilize the term “counter-insurgency operations,” preferring the more neutral term “networked security.” It also heavily emphasized the civilian and reconstruction aspects of its operations.¹¹⁴ The UK was also slow to apply and update COIN doctrine and reform training. Despite suffering “painful lessons” in Basra, Iraq and years of “mowing the grass” in Helmand, it did not open a COIN Centre to train units deploying to Afghanistan until June 2009.¹¹⁵ National reform efforts were therefore uneven and often lagging.

The repeated public statements of national and NATO commitment and the significant efforts to improve organizational capacities occurred during the most violent phase of the conflict in Afghanistan. As mentioned, the fraying pressures of combat

¹¹⁰ Schmitt, “Italian Hard Power,” 5, 7, 9.

¹¹¹ Roy, “With Enough Nails,” 40, 41, 44.

¹¹² Officer E.

¹¹³ Colonel Uwe Hartmann, German Army.

¹¹⁴ Philipp Münch, “The German Approach to Counterinsurgency: Concepts and Practice,” in Ehrhart, Gareis, and Pentland, eds., *Afghanistan in the Balance*, 56-58, 59. Also, Konstantin von Hammerstein, Susanne Koelbl, Alexander Szandar, and Sami Yousafzai, “Expanding Violence: Germany Discovers a War in Afghanistan,” *Spiegel Online*, September 8, 2008.

¹¹⁵ Alexander Alderson, “Too Busy to Learn: Personal Observations on British Campaigns in Iraq and Afghanistan,” in Bailey, Iron, and Strachan, eds., *British Generals in Blair’s Wars*, 287-292.

continued. It can be inferred the U.S. assumption of a leadership role provided the top-down cohesion needed to sustain collective political will. By the time all its surge forces arrived in country in 2010, the United States had more than 100,000 troops committed, which meant it carried the vast preponderance of the operational burden. U.S. leadership was accompanied by unilateral behaviors, some of which the allies tolerated. Despite the SACEUR having originally been given the official role of selecting the ISAF commanders, the Obama administration repeatedly made unilateral decisions and did not consult with NATO about the command position before making official announcements. This was a change from the Bush administration. President Bush had nominated Generals Dan McNeill and David McKiernan as the 10th and 11th ISAF commanders to the NATO Secretary General and SACEUR. He left it to the SACEUR to make the formal selection. The succession of U.S. leaders was not the result of a formal decision by the Alliance to henceforth have the mission led by an American. At the time it was taken by NATO as a logical proposal given the fact the U.S. was by far the largest contributor to ISAF and the effort in Afghanistan.¹¹⁶

However, the precedent of U.S. leadership was taken as a given by the Obama administration and it brushed aside the SACEUR's role in the process. The president relieved General McKiernan in May 2009 because he was resistant to shifting to a more aggressive approach. General McChrystal was relieved on June 23, 2010 after the publication of an article in *Rolling Stone* magazine that was politically damaging to the administration and the president informed his National Security Council of his decision to replace him with General Petraeus before informing the Alliance.¹¹⁷ The McKiernan relief came as a surprise to NATO officials and the SACEUR, General John Craddock, in particular was "shocked and upset" with the way the replacement was done.¹¹⁸ However, Alliance officials accommodated the decision to maintain the image of allied unity and Secretary General Rasmussen publicly validated the change in procedure a year later after

¹¹⁶ NATO, "NATO welcomes US nomination of future Commander ISAF," January 18, 2008, http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/news_1219.htm. NATO, "Weekly press briefing," January 23, 2008, http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/opinions_7385.htm.

¹¹⁷ Gates, *Duty*, 344-346, 487-488, 490.

¹¹⁸ Colonel (retired) Tucker Mansager, U.S. Army.

the McChrystal relief when he congratulated General Petraeus in July 2010, upon his initial visit as ISAF commander to Brussels, on his appointment and unanimous U.S. Senate confirmation.¹¹⁹ The allies arguably accepted this unilateral behavior because the United States had not only solved the burden-sharing problem, but also opened the door to the withdrawal process. The initiation of the transition plan meant national governments could soon end the annual process of gaining parliamentary approval to extend the mandates for their troop deployments.

However, other unilateral behavior was not accepted. The initial CENTCOM planning, in late 2008-early 2009, for the deployment of U.S. surge forces unilaterally changed operational boundaries in RC-South and moved some allies to different operational areas. This was an extremely sensitive issue for the contributing nations who had “put a lot of money” and expended “in some cases a lot of bloodshed” during the previous three years and they were “not willing to change responsibilities in an instant,” particularly when they were not consulted. The RC-South commander, Lieutenant General Mart de Kruif, and his senior staff interjected themselves into the planning process and persuaded the CENTCOM staff to change the plan. In the end, together, they “came up with the best possible plan that accommodated all participating parties the best.”¹²⁰ General McChrystal’s arrival at ISAF headquarters also made waves. For a number of years, he maintained a trusted circle of staff officers who travelled with him from assignment to assignment. Upon his arrival in Kabul, he tried to replace the allies who were filling senior staff positions with his team, but he officially could not because they had been negotiated at SHAPE planning conferences. Instead, he excluded them from his planning efforts, which included primarily U.S. officers and a few British officers. The behavior set a damaging tone which was not overcome until

¹¹⁹ NATO, “Press conference by NATO Secretary General Anders Fogh Rasmussen and the incoming Commander of the NATO-led International Security Assistance Force (ISAF), General David Petraeus,” July 1, 2010, http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natolive/opinions_64783.htm.

¹²⁰ Colonel Johannes Hoogstraten, Netherlands Army.

General Petraeus arrived the next summer (and some of the allies were not sorry to see General McChrystal leave).¹²¹

Despite the disturbances created by successive ISAF commander changes, the surge in troop numbers, material resources and operational enablers, in combination with the change in operational approach, the execution of operations that were significant orders of magnitude larger than all previous coalition operations, the command structure adjustments, and the doctrinal and training reforms had an impact on the coalition's ability to conduct both combat and non-combat operations. Canadian-led COIN operations in Kandahar were successful in securing the city in 2009 even before the U.S. surge forces arrived or ISAF initiated its reformed civilian-military approach.¹²² Overall, coalition forces prevailed in every direct engagement with insurgent forces and usually inflicted "devastating losses" on the attackers. Even the ANA showed "itself superior to the enemy in every major firefight."¹²³ The commanders on the ground were confident they could beat back the insurgency as troop numbers surged, and many of the officers interviewed noted they had an increasingly capable Afghan partner to assist them. As the transition began in 2011, the coalition formally assessed the intensive partnering efforts were translating into "a more capable and effective ANSF."¹²⁴ It expressed confidence the ANSF was "capable of assuming the lead for security responsibility throughout Afghanistan" in the spring of 2012.¹²⁵ The positive Afghan public perception that the ANSF and security ministries were "capable and legitimate security providers for Afghanistan" was supported by their increasing operational sophistication. By 2012, in the most contested regions of RC-South and RC-East, the ANSF was able to plan and conduct "large-scale, multi-day operations" which integrated military and police forces.¹²⁶ The troops on the ground, both Afghan and international, therefore, continued to generate bottom-up cohesion. The improvements in

¹²¹ Information from a number of officers who requested their comments about General McChrystal be off-the-record.

¹²² Roy, "With Enough Nails," 44-45, 47-48.

¹²³ Boot, Kagan, and Kagan, "Yes, We Can," 17.

¹²⁴ *Report on Progress Toward Security and Stability in Afghanistan, October 2011*, 4.

¹²⁵ *Report on Progress Toward Security and Stability in Afghanistan, April 2012*, 1.

¹²⁶ *Report on Progress Toward Security and Stability in Afghanistan, December 2012*, 7, 46.

organizational capacity and operational performance sustained political will. The combat and stabilization operations of the troops on the ground were not the only activities ISAF conducted, however.

ISAF's Other Warfare

The apogee of NATO's involvement in Afghanistan was 2011 when the coalition reached 50 members and troop numbers topped out at over 132,000.¹²⁷ While the combat activity encompassed in the counter-terrorism and counter-insurgency operations received the most attention, the less visible activities were the most important for the long-term security of the Afghan state and ISAF's ability to withdraw on time. By 2011, the coalition's non-combat activities were wide ranging, they included new and expanded missions and activities, and ANSF development and ministerial mentoring had become the main effort. As such, when ISAF and NATO leaders pressed for additional troop contributions after 2010, they were not looking for more combat forces, but for more trainers and advisors.

Lieutenant General William Caldwell, the first commander of NTM-A/CSTC-A, oversaw a substantial organizational adaptation effort within his command in 2010 which was oriented on increasing and expanding NTM-A's training, advising, and mentoring activities to support the Afghan surge. This surge encompassed a push to increase both the quantity and the quality of the ANSF; this in turn required more coalition trainers and mentors. As mentioned in the previous chapter, the target goals for the ANA and ANP had increased between 2002 and 2008. They increased again in 2010 and 2011. Since the international community provided all of the funds for ANSF forces,¹²⁸ decisions on end-strength goals for the ANA and ANP had to be negotiated among the donor countries, key international organizations (NATO, UN, and EU), and the Afghan government. The Joint Coordination and Monitoring Board (JCMB), which included representatives from all these

¹²⁷ ISAF Placemat, July 26, 2011 and December 1, 2011, <http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natolive/107995.htm>.

¹²⁸ ANSF funding sources were the U.S. Afghanistan Security Forces Fund (ASFF), the NATO ANA Trust Fund, and the UN administered Law and Order Trust Fund for Afghanistan (LOTFA).

entities, was set up in 2006 to oversee, coordinate, and make decisions related to the benchmarks in the *Afghanistan Compact* and the *Afghanistan National Development Strategy* (ANDS).¹²⁹ The ANSF was a key element of the security benchmarks. Due to the increasing violence in the conflict, and the clear intent of the coalition to withdraw within a few years, the JCMB decided in January 2010 to increase the end-strength goal for the ANA to 171,600 and the goal for the ANP to 134,00 (by October 2011).¹³⁰ In June 2011, they increased the goals again: to 195,000 for the ANA and 157,000 for the ANP (by October 2012).¹³¹ To accommodate the expanded ANA force structure, the Ministry of Defense activated a sixth Afghan corps, the 215th Corps, in 2010 as RC-Southwest stood up.¹³² As a consequence, Lieutenant General Caldwell assessed he had a requirement for 5,200 trainers and he attended his first force generation conference at NATO in February 2010 with a request for the allies and partners to fill his 1,200 trainer shortfall as quickly as possible.¹³³ Secretary General Rasmussen encapsulated why the trainers were so important: “No trainers, no transition.”¹³⁴

NTM-A’s collective focus was to help the MOD and MOI build professional, self-sustaining forces. Besides increasing the through-put capacity of ANSF training at the 70 ANA and ANP training centers scattered across the country,¹³⁵ Lieutenant General Caldwell led an effort to reform existing training programs and initiate new ones. Leader development training was improved in the basic army and police courses and NTM-A developed new

¹²⁹ Neumann, *The Other War*, 33, 54, 80-83.

¹³⁰ *Report on Progress Toward Security and Stability in Afghanistan, November 2010*, 17.

¹³¹ *Report on Progress Toward Security and Stability in Afghanistan, October 2011*, 4. The Afghan Air Corps is included in the ANA numbers. Of the 195,000 goal, 187,000 is the army and 8,000 is the air force.

¹³² The corps headquarters was located near the RC-Southwest headquarters in Lashkar Gar.

¹³³ NTM-A, *Year In Review: November 2009 to November 2010* (November 2010), 5, <http://www.ntm-a.com>; and NATO, “Press briefing by LtGen William Caldwell, Commander of the NATO Training Mission – Afghanistan (NTM-A),” March 3, 2010, http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/opinions_61890.

¹³⁴ LTG Bill Caldwell, “No Trainers? No Transition,” *NATO Review* (November 2010), <http://www.nato.int/docu/review/2010/Lisbon-Summit/EN/index.htm>.

¹³⁵ LTG William Caldwell, “Teaming, Transparency, and Transition in Afghanistan,” *NATO Review* (October 2011), <http://www.nato.int/docu/review/2011/Afghanistan-2011/EN/index.htm>.

courses for mid-grade and senior level leaders.¹³⁶ It expanded the specialty schools and courses from eight to twelve and they included intelligence, legal, military police, logistics, transportation, medical, finance, artillery, signal/communications, and personnel/human resources.¹³⁷ It also reformed the police training programs. It instituted “internationally recognized and certified programs of instruction” that were also implemented by EUPOL, the German Police Project Team, and the other bilateral police training efforts. Not only did the new AUP recruits attend an eight-week training course before assignment to their police districts, but the programs shifted the focus of training from paramilitary tasks which supported COIN operations to traditional civilian law enforcement functions. As such they included human rights training, rule of law training, and investigative techniques.¹³⁸ As the reformed programs were implemented, the FDD program was formally ended in February 2012.¹³⁹ ISAF and NTM-A also supported the Afghan Local Police (ALP) program which had been initiated by the Afghan government and MOI. The ALP served as “neighborhood watch” elements to improve local security, especially in rural areas. They were trained by the AUP and coalition forces conducting village stability operations and NTM-A provided weapons, ammunition, and communications equipment.¹⁴⁰

NTM-A also undertook activities that were unexpected and unprecedented. It assessed that low literacy levels was an area it could not ignore. A functional level of literacy was necessary for the long-term viability of the ANSF. So NTM-A adapted to the conditions of the environment it found itself in and initiated an extremely ambitious literacy and numeracy education program. While OMC-A had started literacy training years before, it had not been mandatory. In 2010, NTM-A assessed that about 14% of incoming recruits

¹³⁶ NTM-A, *Year in Review*, 3, 4, 6, 7, 10-12; and NATO, “Press briefing by LtGen William Caldwell, Commander of the NATO Training Mission – Afghanistan (NTM-A),” March 3, 2010.

¹³⁷ NTM-A, *Year in Review*, 7, 10, 12, 15-18; and Caldwell, “Teaming, Transparency, and Transition in Afghanistan.”

¹³⁸ NATO, “Press briefing by the Commander of the NATO Training Mission – Afghanistan,” October 13, 2011, http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natolive/opinions_79369.htm. Also, Colonel Frederick Gellert, U.S. Army.

¹³⁹ *Germany’s support for police reform in Afghanistan*, 19.

¹⁴⁰ NTM-A, *Year in Review*, 24. The ALP program was preceded by the Afghan National Auxiliary Police (ANAP) program. The ANAP was a two-year (2006-2008) “short-term stopgap” to provide some security to Afghans in their villages while the ANP was being built. Neumann, *The Other War*, 121-122.

were literate and among current ANSF members the literacy rate for officers was about 93%, for NCOs it was about 35%, and for enlisted about 11%. Lieutenant General Caldwell therefore decided to make literacy training (in Dari and Pashto) mandatory for all military and police and embedded educational programs in all the training courses. The goal was to ensure members of the ANSF had functional levels of literacy. This would mean all soldiers and police could perform such tasks as read a basic maintenance manual, submit a supply requisition, read their weapon's serial number, write a simple report, and verify they had received the correct pay. Increased literacy would also enable the establishment of durable accountability and logistics programs, and serve as the foundation for specialist skills, all of which were critical for self-sustaining security forces over the long term.¹⁴¹ To support the requirement, NTM-A hired over 3,000 Afghan teachers.¹⁴² It also found the literacy programs were hugely popular among young Afghans.¹⁴³

The expanded and reformed training efforts resulted in a number of tangible improvements in recruitment and retention. The ANSF met their recruiting goals in 2010 and 2011 and reduced attrition levels, even as it expanded its ANA and ANP end-strength goals. By 2011, so many young Afghans were volunteering to serve that NTM-A literally had to turn away more than a thousand of them each month because the number of volunteers exceeded the recruiting requirements. As a result, the ANSF met the target of 352,000 ANA and ANP forces by October 2012. In addition, since the beginning of the effort to build the ANSF in 2002, the coalition had been acutely conscious of the ethnic composition of the forces. In particular, it had worked hard to build an ANA that reflected Afghan society and the relative percentages of the main ethnic groups, Pashtun, Tajik, Hazara, and Uzbek, but for years southern Pashtuns did not volunteer. This changed in 2011, likely as a result of intensive recruiting efforts as well as the operational security gains achieved in the south. That year, NTM-A noted an increasing trend in southern Pashtun

¹⁴¹ NTM-A, *Year in Review*, 10-11; and NATO, "Press briefing by LtGen William Caldwell, Commander of the NATO Training Mission – Afghanistan (NTM-A)," March 3, 2010.

¹⁴² NATO, "Press briefing by the Commander of the NATO Training Mission – Afghanistan," October 13, 2011.

¹⁴³ NTM-A, *Year in Review*, 11.

recruitment.¹⁴⁴ It had set the goal of 4% of new recruits from this demographic, but it exceeded it - with 10.9%.¹⁴⁵

Finally, since NTM-A ultimately wanted to work itself out of its job, it instituted a train-the-trainer program to prepare and certify Afghans who would step into the role of trainers.¹⁴⁶ It began to formally turn over responsibility for training to Afghans at ANA and ANP training centers in late 2011.¹⁴⁷ The turn-over included subsequent evaluation of Afghan instructors and recommendations for improvements.¹⁴⁸ By the end of 2013, Afghans were conducting more than 90% of the training and NTM-A was reducing its trainers.¹⁴⁹ In 2014, it turned over the training facilities themselves to the Afghans.¹⁵⁰

Competent and professional security forces needed competent ministerial oversight and leadership. While ministerial development and mentoring efforts had begun years before by OMC-A, CSTC-A, and the ISAF headquarters, NTM-A expanded the MOD and MOI mentoring programs. In particular, it significantly increased the number of full-time military advisors/mentors assigned to key personnel in both ministries.¹⁵¹ Prior to NTM-A's creation there were eight full-time advisors in the MOD and a handful in the MOI (a small

¹⁴⁴ NATO, "Press briefing by the Commander of NATO's Training mission in Afghanistan, Lieutenant General William Caldwell," February 23, 2011, http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/opinions_70773.htm; and NATO, "Press briefing by the Commander of the NATO Training Mission – Afghanistan," October 13, 2011.

¹⁴⁵ *Report on Progress Toward Security and Stability in Afghanistan, October 2011*, 23.

¹⁴⁶ Colonel Keith Detwiler, U.S. Army.

¹⁴⁷ NATO, "Press briefing by the Commander of the NATO Training Mission – Afghanistan," October 13, 2011.

¹⁴⁸ Colonel Paul McKenney, U.S. Army (served as the leader of an assessment team that deployed to Afghanistan in 2012 to evaluate the instructors and curriculum at the ANA junior staff college in Kabul; at the time he was teaching at the Canadian staff college and he was asked to lead this Canadian team), telephone interview with author, January 14, 2013.

¹⁴⁹ Anders Fogh Rasmussen, *The Secretary General's Annual Report 2013* (Brussels: NATO Public Diplomacy Division, 2013), 6.

¹⁵⁰ Jens Stoltenberg, *The Secretary General's Annual Report 2014* (Brussels, NATO Public Diplomacy Division, 2014), 7.

¹⁵¹ In addition, many of the officers assigned to the CSTC-A and NTM-A headquarters staffs were assigned as part-time advisors. They were expected to fulfill their staff duties within ISAF, but also assist their counter-parts in the MOD and MOI. This often meant they spent little time working with Afghans because their primary duties were too time-consuming. There was also sensitivity about calling the full-time coalition officers "mentors" since they were younger than their Afghan principals. Many of the Afghans had extensive experience as mujahedin or officers in the Afghan military of the 1980's. But while they had extensive "combat" experience, they frequently needed help in the institutional and bureaucratic functions of running a ministry. So the coalition officers called themselves advisors and fulfilled whatever role was needed with their Afghan principal – aide, assistant, liaison, advisor, or in some cases mentors for specific competencies. Information from interviews.

number of contractors also worked as full-time advisors). NTM-A increased the MOD advisors to over 100.¹⁵² The MOI full-time advisors increased to over 200 (this included bilateral contributions from EUPOL, the French Gendarmerie, the Italian Carabinieri, the Dutch Marechaussee, and German Grenz Polizei).¹⁵³ NTM-A also implemented a new training initiative to improve the quality of the military advisors. It created an Advisors Course, since the military officers assigned as advisors received no preparatory training before their deployments to Afghanistan. It identified specific fields of expertise and experiences needed for specific positions, for example the Advisor to the Minister of Interior had to be a military police officer, but it also took into account personalities. Final decisions for the key advisors were based on an assessment of whether they would be a personality fit with the Afghan they would be advising.¹⁵⁴ Finally, since NTM-A focused the advising/mentoring effort on developing and assessing the strategic level institutional functions of the ministries, it initiated the Ministry of Defense Advisors (MoDA) program in the summer of 2010.¹⁵⁵ This program brought in senior level U.S. Department of Defense civilians with unique skills “to improve Afghan institutional-level competencies in strategic planning, policy analysis and development, installation management, budget, finance, logistics, personnel and education, legal systems, and accountability.” These advisors received six weeks of special training before their deployment, they were assigned within the MOD, MOI, and Afghan General Staff, and they numbered almost 90 by late 2011.¹⁵⁶

The ISAF headquarters and IJC were not involved in the ministerial advisor/mentoring efforts, but they did assign coalition officers as liaisons to a wide variety of Afghan ministries. They called this “ministerial outreach.” The liaisons served multiple

¹⁵² NTM-A, *A Year in Review*, 20. Also, Colonel (retired) George Woods, U.S. Army.

¹⁵³ *Report on Progress Toward Security and Stability in Afghanistan*, November 2010, 35.

¹⁵⁴ Colonel (retired) George Woods, U.S. Army. Colonel Robert Lowe, U.S. Army (served as the Senior Advisor to the Commanding General of the Afghan National Civil Order Police (ANCOP), NTM-A, ISAF, Kabul, Afghanistan, July 2011-June 2012), interview with author at Carlisle Barracks, PA, December 20, 2012. Colonel Steven Donaldson, U.S. Army (served as the Senior Advisor to the Afghan Minister of Interior, NTM-A, ISAF, Kabul, Afghanistan, July 2012-May 2013), interview with author at Carlisle Barracks, PA, January 28, 2014.

¹⁵⁵ NTM-A, *A Year in Review*, 22.

¹⁵⁶ *Report on Progress Toward Security and Stability in Afghanistan*, October 2011, 19. Also, Colonel, (retired) George Woods, U.S. Army.

purposes. They were information conduits between ISAF and the ministries and they helped each side understand the intentions and actions of the other. They assisted the capacity building of the ministries because they gained insights into areas where the ministries needed help. For example, liaison activities included coordinating ISAF airlift to fly ministers out to the provinces and districts, and finding funding sources to equip ministries with computer systems and to make civil servant pay more comparable with the pay received by Afghans working for the international community.¹⁵⁷ Their most important role was facilitating the integration of the Afghan ministries into the governance and economic development lines of effort of the ISAF operations across the country. One liaison was assigned to a ministry cluster – the Ministry of Mines, Ministry of Urban Development, Ministry of Public Works, and Ministry of Energy and Water – and he stated to the author he was explicitly given the mission of “connecting” the central government via his ministers to the provinces and districts – so they could listen to villagers, coordinate economic projects, and make the Afghan governmental processes and systems work.¹⁵⁸ Another liaison was assigned to the Independent Directorate of Local Governance (IDLG) and he helped integrate it into IJC’s operational planning effort as it updated *Operation Omid* in 2010. He also facilitated the IDLG’s governance role in the COIN operations in Kandahar.¹⁵⁹ The emphasis on ministerial development and outreach in 2009 and later was part of ISAF trying to work itself out of a job. Enabling the relevant Afghan ministries to execute the security, governance, and economic development lines of effort on their own, or with minimal international assistance, would facilitate the transition and ISAF’s withdrawal.

The overlap of IJC and NTM-A/CSTC-A was not limited to the assignment of coalition officers to the Afghan ministries. Even though IJC took over control of the ANA

¹⁵⁷ Two of the officers interviewed gave overall descriptions of the ministerial outreach efforts by the ISAF headquarters and IJC. Colonel (retired) Richard Lacquement, U.S. Army. Also, Lieutenant Colonel Eric Shafa, U.S. Air Force (as a member of the Afghanistan-Pakistan Hands Program he was assigned to the ISAF headquarters and served as a liaison to a cluster of Afghan ministries, June 2010-May 2011; also served as the commander of a Provincial Reconstruction Team in Kapisa Province, Regional Command-East, ISAF, Afghanistan, February-September 2012), interview with author at Carlisle Barracks, PA, November 18, 2013.

¹⁵⁸ Lieutenant Colonel Eric Shafa, U.S. Air Force.

¹⁵⁹ Colonel (retired) Richard Lacquement, U.S. Army.

and ANP training/mentoring teams, NTM-A still played a support role, because it provided funding to them.¹⁶⁰ It also funded and ran the ANA and ANP regional training centers, it funded and coordinated the building of new infrastructure (bases and barracks) to support the new Afghan units being created to support the Afghan surge, and it provided logistical and training support to the Afghan formations once they were assigned to the ANA Corps (this included such activities as fielding new equipment, paying for fuel, and providing literacy and driver's training). This NTM-A support was provided through Regional Support Commands (RSC) that it established in the five regions (north, west, south, east, and capital); they mirrored ISAF's regional command structure.¹⁶¹

While ETT/OMLTs and PMT/POMLTs had been embedded in ANA and ANP units since 2003, their roles and functions adapted over time as their assigned Afghan units became more operationally competent. They essentially went from being trainers, coaches, and mentors, to being combat advisors and partners. They also served as liaison elements to ISAF forces to coordinate the provision of coalition combat air support, artillery support, or MEDEVAC support to ANSF formations engaged in combat operations. The OMLT/POMLT mission surged after 2009 to keep pace with the increase in ANSF end-strength and ISAF set the hugely ambitious goal of embedding mentoring teams throughout the army and police formations. For the ANA, it wanted a team in every *kandak*, brigade, and corps, as well as at garrison-level, and for the ANP it wanted teams in every district and province police station, and in the ANCOP and border police *kandaks*. This generated a huge need from the contributing nations. According to the officer who coordinated the

¹⁶⁰ Allied nation OMLT and POMLT teams had access to U.S. funding to provide logistical and training support to ANSF formations because CSTC-A embedded U.S. logistical support teams into them. Colonel Denis Tretinjak, Croatian Army. Also, Colonel Robert Mundell, U.S. Army (served as Commander, Afghan Regional Security Integration Command-North, June-October 2009, then as Commander, Regional Support Command-North, November 2009-July 2010, Mazar-e-Sharif, NTM-A/CSTC-A, ISAF, Afghanistan), interview with author at Carlisle Barracks, PA, July 25, 2013.

¹⁶¹ The RSC's were not controlled by IJC and they had been preceded by a similar command structure under CSTC-A called the Afghan Regional Security Integration Commands (ARSIC). As with the RSC's, there had been an ARSIC in each of the five regions. Colonel Robert Mundell, U.S. Army. Also, Major James Cheney, U.S. Army (served as the ANP Support Officer, Regional Support Command-Capital, February-August 2010, then as Executive Officer, DCOM-Regional Support, August 2010-February 2011, NTM-A/CSTC-A, ISAF, Kabul, Afghanistan), email interview with author, April 14, 2014.

assignment of all army and police mentoring teams, 2009-2010, at any one time he was tracking some 13,000 coalition troops. It was a hugely complex task, since most teams deployed for only six months, they varied in size (from a dozen to 40 members) and nations set caveats on the types of units (such as infantry, artillery, or logistics units) their troops could train/mentor, or where their teams could operate.¹⁶² Despite constant calls by NATO leaders for more national contributions, there were chronic shortfalls in fielded teams.¹⁶³ ISAF never met its goals.

The teams were also trying to work themselves out of their job, and as such they submitted unit assessment reports to IJC every six to eight weeks.¹⁶⁴ The idea was to bring the units to “Capability Milestone 1”¹⁶⁵ at which point they could plan, coordinate, and execute operations independently. Once a unit reached this level, the OMLT/POMLT would be removed. However, ISAF still assigned a small liaison element at brigade level to coordinate ISAF enablers when necessary (close air support, medical support).¹⁶⁶ ISAF initially called these elements Military Advisory Teams (MAT) and Police Advisory Teams

¹⁶² Lieutenant Colonel Jeffrey Dickerson, U.S. Army. Examples of national limitations: at one point an Albanian-U.S. OMLT in Kabul could not travel outside the city limits, even if the combat support battalion it was mentoring was sent outside the city for a mission, and a Slovenian OMLT in Herat could not leave the confines of its base. Lieutenant Colonel Arjan Hilaj, Albanian Army (served as the commander of an Albanian-U.S. OMLT, Regional Command-Capital, ISAF, Kabul, Afghanistan, July 2011-March 2012), interview with author at Carlisle Barracks, PA, April 3, 2013; and Colonel Alberto Vezzoli, Italian Army.

¹⁶³ In 2007, the requirement for OMLTs was 46; ISAF fielded 32. In mid-2010 the OMLT requirement was 180 (168 fielded) and the POMLT requirement was 470 (327 fielded). In December 2011 the OMLT requirement was 172 (157 fielded) and POMLT requirement was 551 (334 fielded). In December 2012 the total requirement for SFATs was 466 (and 406 were fielded). Sources: NATO, “Weekly press briefing by NATO Spokesman, James Appathurai,” October 17, 2007, http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/opinions_8514.htm; NATO Fact Sheet, “NATO’s Operational Mentor and Liaison Teams (OMLTs),” June 2010; NATO Fact Sheet, “NATO’s Police Operational Mentor and Liaison Teams (POMLTs),” June 2010; NATO Media Backgrounder, “Afghan National Security Forces (ANSF): Training and Development,” December 2011; *Report on Progress Toward Security and Stability in Afghanistan, October 2011*, 40; and *Report on Progress Toward Security and Stability in Afghanistan, December 2012*, 10.

¹⁶⁴ Lieutenant Colonel Arjan Hilaj, Albanian Army; and Colonel Michael Peeters, U.S. Army (served as a PMT team leader and advisor to an AUP provincial police chief, Ghazni Province, Regional Command-East, ISAF, Afghanistan, July 2011-June 2012), email interview with author, August 23, 2012.

¹⁶⁵ The Commander’s Unit Assessment Tool (CUAT) assessed units on a scale of 1 to 5. A Capability Milestone score of 5 meant the unit was newly formed and could barely function even with partner assistance.

¹⁶⁶ Colonel Christopher Cardoni, U.S. Army.

(PAT) in 2012,¹⁶⁷ but shifted to the generic term of Security Force Assistance Teams (SFAT) by the end of the year.¹⁶⁸ While there were still shortfalls in SFAT teams as ISAF was withdrawing, there were also a large number of ANSF units that did not need them. For example, ISAF assessed there were 90 ANA and 356 ANP units (*kandaks*, police stations, or headquarters) that were fully capable and were in fact operating autonomously in mid-2013.¹⁶⁹

The non-combat activities of training, advising, and mentoring were complemented by the activities of the PRTs, the initiation of counter-narcotics operations, and coordination with a surge in Pakistani Army operations in the FATA and NWFP. Like the training and advising missions, the PRT mission expanded over time. By 2010, there were 28 PRTs spread across the country (see Appendix 5), their size varied from 80 to 600 members, and they engaged in a wide range of activities since they responded to the conditions within their provinces. The focus of the PRTs also shifted over time since they also wanted to work themselves out of a job.

As previously noted, the PRTs were the primary element in the coalition's economic development line of effort. They also complemented the ministerial mentoring efforts by their bottom-up mentoring and facilitation of local governance. They were initially oriented on "quick wins" and "quick impact" projects in a variety of areas: education (building and supplying schools), health (building clinics and hospitals), power generation (micro-hydro and micro-solar projects), agriculture (irrigation and canal projects, assistance to farmers), and rural development (digging wells, building roads and bridges, building police stations and other local administrative buildings). These projects were coordinated and prioritized in consultation with the local Afghans (provincial and district leadership, and the local representatives from the ministries of education, health, agriculture,

¹⁶⁷ NATO Media Backgrounder, "Afghan National Security Forces (ANSF): Training and Development," April 2012, <http://www.isaf.nato.int>.

¹⁶⁸ NATO Media Backgrounder, "Afghan National Security Forces (ANSF): Training and Development," December 2012, www.isaf.nato.int.

¹⁶⁹ *Report on Progress Toward Security and Stability in Afghanistan, July 2013* (Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Defense Report to Congress, 2013), 104.

rural development, public works, etc.). They tried to synchronize these short term development projects with the longer term view and efforts of UNAMA, USAID, and other national and international development agencies. They supported the security operations of the battle groups in their areas by providing humanitarian relief, and conducting medical and veterinary assistance activities. Many were involved in police training, some interacted and negotiated with the leaders of rival groups to reduce ethnic and tribal tensions, and they provided election assistance, when necessary. Over time, especially as the coalition started to think about withdrawal, the PRTs realized they needed to spend far more time on developing Afghan capacities. They shifted from coordinating and managing development projects themselves to facilitating the various Afghan players' ability to do it. As such, they worked to connect the villages, districts, and provinces to the agencies of the central government. They also mentored district and provincial Afghan officials on how to create and manage a provincial development plan, build and manage a budget, identify and prioritize projects, solicit funding, and then execute projects.¹⁷⁰ They essentially played a key role in developing local governance – showing Afghans how provincial and district level governance should work.

Since Afghanistan was essentially an agrarian society with a massive need for development assistance and there were so few civilian agricultural experts in the PRTs (in most cases this was represented by one USAID officer), the United States augmented the capacities of the PRTs operating in RC-South and RC-East, 2008-2012, by deploying 15 Agri-business Development Teams (ADT). These small teams included 12-15 agriculture subject matter experts who worked in partnership with the PRTs, USAID, and the U.S. Department of Agriculture. They primarily focused on human capital development,

¹⁷⁰ A number of the officers interviewed described PRT activities: Colonel Ivar Omsted, Norwegian Army; Colonel Romulusz Ruszin, Hungarian Army; Lieutenant Colonel Hugh McAslan, New Zealand Army; Lieutenant Colonel Mindaugas Steponvacicius, Lithuanian Army; Lieutenant Colonel Eric Shafa, U.S. Air Force; Lieutenant Colonel Brent Grometer, U.S. Air Force; First Sergeant (retired) Robert Browne, U.S. Army (served as the first sergeant of a Provincial Reconstruction Team, Laghman Province, Regional Command-East, ISAF, Afghanistan, April 2006-April 2007), interview with author at Carlisle Barracks, PA, December 20, 2012; and Officer A.

specifically, mentoring the agriculture extension agents in the districts and the provincial Director of Agriculture, Irrigation, and Livestock.¹⁷¹

As IJC stood up and developed ISAF's national civil-military campaign plan, it also administered more oversight of the PRTs by hosting periodic conferences which included the provincial governors. The IJC Commander communicated his overall vision for ISAF operations and he issued specific guidance to the PRTs. By late 2010, this guidance was oriented on transition and as a consequence the PRTs began submitting reports through the regional commands to IJC that assessed "how self-sustaining Afghans were in the area of security, in the area of development, and in the area of governance." The reports were needed to help make transition decisions and to identify when the PRTs could close down.¹⁷² The goal was to phase out the PRTs as the security transition occurred.

The increased oversight and control did not inhibit innovation and flexibility among the regions and the PRTs, however. For example, in the west, south, and east, the battle space of the regions was "assigned" to specific battalion or brigade battle groups. The other elements operating in the space, PRTs, OMLT/POMLTs, were subordinate to these battle space owners and they coordinated and synchronized their activities with these combat forces. RC-North was different. For example, the Hungarian PRT in Baghlan Province was designated the battle space owner in 2011. Even though the multinational forces in the PRT were prohibited by national caveats from engaging in combat operations, they accompanied the German battle group and the ANA and ANP units in the province on partnered operations, and the PRT commander was responsible for coordinating the activities of all the coalition and ANSF elements in COIN operations.¹⁷³ Norway took innovation one step further by creating a hybrid organization that combined both its battle group and its PRT in Faryab Province after the attack on the PRT in 2006. Due to its combined security,

¹⁷¹ Colonel North Charles, U.S. Army (served as the deputy commander of an Agri-business Development Team, Nangarhar Province, Regional Command-East, ISAF, Afghanistan, July 2010-June 2011), interview with author at Carlisle Barracks, PA, December 21, 2012.

¹⁷² Lieutenant Colonel Brent Grometer, U.S. Air Force. Also, Colonel Ingrid Gjerde, Norwegian Army; and Lieutenant Colonel Hugh McAslan, New Zealand Army.

¹⁷³ Colonel Romulusz Ruszin, Hungarian Army.

development, governance mission, this Task Force Faryab/PRT Faryab was the largest PRT in Afghanistan – with 600 members.¹⁷⁴ Germany also created combined battle group/PRT task forces in Kunduz and Feyzabad.¹⁷⁵ As with the ministerial mentors and the OMLT/POMLTs, by 2010-2011, the PRTs were increasingly pushing their Afghan partners to take the lead role in local governance and development activities, and they began closing down or handing over projects.¹⁷⁶ The first PRT closed in 2011 and the rest closed over the next three years (see Appendix 5).

ISAF's involvement in counter-narcotic operations, a new mission, was slow and incremental because it was initially perceived as an area where civilian agencies in the international community, with the United Kingdom acting as lead nation, would support the Afghan government. A number of allies were also reluctant to get involved, for example, as the ISAF mission expanded across Afghanistan and Germany took responsibility for RC-North, the German government, while acknowledging that opium poppy cultivation was a "major problem" in Afghanistan, insisted it was "a matter for the Afghans." It therefore limited German military support to "logistical assistance."¹⁷⁷

The Afghan government recognized the narcotics industry threatened the country and as early as 2002 the Afghan Interim Administration banned opium poppy cultivation and began a limited eradication campaign.¹⁷⁸ President Karzai's government later took a number of steps to stop the illicit narcotics industry: it ratified relevant UN conventions; it criminalized opium cultivation, production, use, and smuggling; it created a Ministry of Counter-Narcotics and a special division of counter-narcotics police; and it implemented

¹⁷⁴ Colonel Ivar Omsted, Norwegian Army.

¹⁷⁵ Colonel Uwe Hartmann, German Army.

¹⁷⁶ Lieutenant Colonel Eric Shafa, U.S. Air Force; Colonel Ivar Omsted, Norwegian Army; Lieutenant Colonel Hugh McAslan, New Zealand Army; and Colonel Ingrid Gjerde, Norwegian Army.

¹⁷⁷ "Berlin Extends German Forces' Mandate in Afghanistan . . . Though Germans to Avoid Counternarcotics Operations," September 30, 2005, <http://www.afghanistannewscenter.com/news/2005/september/sep302005.html>.

¹⁷⁸ Christopher M. Blanchard, *Afghanistan: Narcotics and U.S. Policy* (Washington, DC: Congressional Research Service Report for Congress, December 6, 2007), 9.

eradication programs.¹⁷⁹ At its most fundamental, Afghanistan had to create from the ground up a society governed by the rule of law, with sufficient police forces, and a functioning justice system in order to eliminate the illicit opium economy. It also needed to deal with the extreme poverty of the vast majority of the Afghan population and give farmers a viable alternative to poppy, with an infrastructure that could support the agricultural sector – to include roads, markets, storage, and distribution networks. By 2008, this was all still nascent. In the meantime, the opium economy exploded. According to the UN, Afghanistan produced 90% of the world’s illegal opium by the end of 2007. It represented over half of the country’s GDP. The export value of the opiates produced was estimated to be some \$4 billion, about three-quarters of which went to the insurgent coalition, drug traffickers, and “warlords.”¹⁸⁰ The Taliban coalition also became much more deeply involved. It not only taxed drug shipments, and collaborated with traffickers to provide protection to the shipments and heroin refining facilities in the areas it controlled, but it also began running its own refineries and created opium storage and distribution networks to support local insurgent commanders.¹⁸¹ The illicit narcotics industry therefore became an incubator of insurgency, criminal activity, and corruption (that affected all levels of Afghan society and its government), and as such it threatened every element of ISAF’s comprehensive approach.

Essentially, ISAF could not avoid becoming involved in counter-narcotics, especially since the Afghan government repeatedly asked it to do more to help. By early 2008, it was providing indirect support by training and equipping the various police forces,

¹⁷⁹ NATO, “Press briefing by Hikmet Çetin, NATO Senior Civilian Representative in Afghanistan and Mr. Habibullah Qaderi, Minister for Counter Narcotics of Afghanistan,” January 20, 2005, http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/opinions_21943.htm.

¹⁸⁰ NATO, *Afghanistan briefing: Helping secure Afghanistan’s future* (Brussels: NATO Public Diplomacy Division, 2008), 9. Mike Martin describes in detail the involvement of police forces and provincial and district leaders in Helmand in the illicit opium economy. The provincial governor, Sher Mohammed, who was removed on the insistence of the British, for example, was the target of a raid by Afghan narcotics police in June 2005. They found 9 tons of opium in his office. Martin, *An Intimate War*, 119-124, 133-134.

¹⁸¹ Gretchen Peters, “The new killing fields?” *NATO Review* (Summer 2009), http://www.nato.int/docu/review/2009/Organized_Crime/EN/index.htm. Also, Gretchen S. Peters, “The Taliban and the Opium Trade,” in Antonio Giustozzi, ed., *Decoding the New Taliban: Insights from the Afghan Field* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2009), 9-11.

and providing intelligence and logistics assistance. It also helped the government explain its counter-narcotics policy to the Afghan people, by, for example, explicitly stating that ISAF was not involved in eradication.¹⁸² At the April 2008 Summit in Bucharest, the allies declared they would “support Afghan-led efforts to tackle the narcotics problem.”¹⁸³ According to the SACEUR, General Craddock, the summit was a pivotal moment when the Alliance “resolved to play a heightened role in the counter-narcotics effort.”¹⁸⁴ The decision legitimized counter-narcotics operations as a valid military mission and ISAF activity subsequently expanded.

In September 2008, the NAC discussed how NATO could maximize its efforts to support the Afghan government,¹⁸⁵ and in October allied leaders agreed to allow ISAF to conduct interdiction operations against facilitators (insurgents and traffickers) and facilities (drug processing labs), in accordance with the law of armed conflict. The SACEUR followed up the decision by encouraging all contributing nations “to play a part in this essential task.”¹⁸⁶ ISAF wasted no time implementing this new NATO mandate and by the summer of 2009 it had made a dent in the illicit narcotics economy by destroying 43 drug labs, capturing a number of drug traffickers, and seizing 34 tons of opium, seven tons of hashish, and 58 tons of precursor chemicals.¹⁸⁷ As with all things ISAF, the governments of contributing nations decided the degree to which their militaries’ could participate in counter-narcotics operations, but even Germany loosened its caveats and by 2008 the Bundeswehr was interdicting opium trade routes to the north.¹⁸⁸ In addition, ISAF

¹⁸² NATO, *Afghanistan briefing*, 9.

¹⁸³ NATO, “ISAF’s Strategic Vision: Declaration by the Heads of State and Government of the Nations contributing to the UN-mandated NATO-led International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) in Afghanistan,” April 3, 2008, http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natolive/official_texts_8444.htm.

¹⁸⁴ General John Craddock, “SACEUR’s address to the Royal United Services Institute for Defence and Security Studies: NATO Operations – Internal and External Challenges,” October 20, 2008, <http://www.nato.int/shape/opinions/2008/s081020a.htm>.

¹⁸⁵ NATO, “Press briefing by NATO Spokesman, James Appathurai and video teleconference by General Robert W. Cone, Commander of the Combined Security Transition Command – Afghanistan,” September 3, 2008, http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/opinions_46441.htm.

¹⁸⁶ Craddock, “SACEUR’s address to the Royal United Services Institute for Defence and Security Studies.”

¹⁸⁷ NATO, “Press conference by NATO Secretary General Jaap de Hoop Scheffer,” June 12, 2009, http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/opinions_55630.htm.

¹⁸⁸ Hammerstein, Koelbl, Szandar, and Yousafzai, “Expanding Violence.”

headquarters created a new organizational element, the Combined Joint Interagency Task Force-Nexus (CJIATF-Nexus), to support the regional commands and to facilitate coordination with the Afghan government and the international civilian agencies involved in counter-narcotics operations as they worked to “dismantle narcotics trafficking networks.”¹⁸⁹ Overall, achieving progress in combating the narcotics industry was exceedingly difficult and despite successes in improving Afghan policing capabilities and interdicting and eradicating opium production in some regions, by 2014, as ISAF was drawing down, “the narcotics trade in Afghanistan [remained] large, and insurgent penetration of that market [was] extensive and expanding.”¹⁹⁰ This new operational mission was a strategic failure for the Alliance.

As ISAF surged troops and expanded operations and training, it continued to coordinate with the Pakistani military through multiple venues, such as the Tripartite Commission and its sub-committees, the border coordination centers, and senior leader visits. In December 2009, it also created a new organization, the ISAF Coordination Element in Pakistan (ICE-PAK), located in Islamabad, to enable continuous liaison and coordination at the operational level with the Pakistan Army headquarters. The ICE-PAK consolidated a variety of coalition liaison officers from ISAF headquarters, USFOR-A, RC-South, and RC-East into one office. The element provided information about ISAF operations along the border and it monitored and shared information about cross border activity in an effort to prevent or de-escalate any ISAF-Pakistan military fratricidal incidents.¹⁹¹ The continuous military coordination became more necessary as Pakistan increased operations on its side of the border after 2008.

As mentioned in the previous chapter, the TTP and TNSM revolted in 2007, causing the Pakistan army to shift to COIN operations and significantly increase the commitment of

¹⁸⁹ *Report on Progress Toward Security and Stability in Afghanistan, April 2010*, 76.

¹⁹⁰ *Report on Progress Toward Security and Stability in Afghanistan, April 2014* (Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Defense Report to Congress, 2014), 81.

¹⁹¹ Colonel Paul Phillips, U.S. Army (served as the Chief, ISAF Coordination Element in Pakistan, Islamabad, September 2009-August 2010), interview with author at Carlisle Barracks, PA, December 18, 2012.

army forces into the FATA and NWFP. The post-Musharraf government of Prime Minister Yousaf Gilani initially tried to deal with the conflict by negotiating peace settlements with insurgent groups in the spring of 2008,¹⁹² but the effort failed because the peace agreements were viewed “as a display of weakness” by the government.¹⁹³ The insurgents exploited the safe havens that were granted to them to step up attacks against military and civilian targets in Pakistan. By early 2014, the toll was catastrophic: over 50,000 soldiers and civilians had been killed or injured in insurgent terrorist attacks. As a consequence, Pakistan surged COIN operations, 2009-2014, and ramped up the scale of its operations. Most notably it conducted 251 brigade-level operations and two corps-level operations, and deployed and maintained some 150,000 troops along the border.¹⁹⁴ Many of the operations were complementary of ISAF operations. To assist coordination, collaboration, and planning for operations on both sides of the border, the IJC hosted periodic Campaign Planning Conferences, beginning in early 2010, that included ISAF, ANSF, and Pakistan military representatives.¹⁹⁵ The new organizations, new operating procedures, and new relationships facilitated operational successes. By early 2014, the Pakistani government controlled 87% of the territory of the FATA and NWFP and the final remaining insurgent sanctuary and redoubt (for Pakistani insurgent groups, al Qaeda, and Afghan insurgent groups) was North Waziristan.¹⁹⁶ The army launched an offensive called *Operation Zarb-e-Azb* (loosely translated as “strike of the Prophet’s sword”) into this tribal agency on June 15, 2014. By the end of the year, the army had regained control of key towns, to include the agency capital of Miranshah, terrorist attacks across Pakistan had dropped 30%, it appeared the

¹⁹² Daveed Gartenstein-Ross and Bill Roggio, “Descent into Appeasement,” *The Weekly Standard*, Vol. 13, No. 37 (June 9, 2008): 16-17.

¹⁹³ Michael Rubin, “Sixty Miles from the Capital,” *The Weekly Standard*, Vol. 14, No. 32 (May 11, 2009): 10.

¹⁹⁴ Brigadier General Ahsan Gulrez, Pakistan Army (Briefing given as a Noon Time Lecture, U.S. Army War College, Carlisle Barracks, PA, January 13, 2014). The briefing stated that in 2005 there were 61,000 Army and Frontier Corps troops deployed along the Pakistan-Afghan border. This increased to 112,000 in 2008, 148,000 in 2010, and topped out at 158,000 in 2013.

¹⁹⁵ *Report on Progress Toward Security and Stability in Afghanistan, April 2010*, 32. *Report on Progress Toward Security and Stability in Afghanistan, November 2010*, 50. *Report on Progress Toward Security and Stability in Afghanistan, December 2012*, 146.

¹⁹⁶ Brigadier General Ahsan Gulrez, Pakistan Army.

various insurgent groups had lost their sanctuary, and the TTP had “all but fallen apart.”¹⁹⁷ Overall, these Pakistani operations and the pressure on the insurgent sanctuaries supported the ISAF transition.

All of the non-combat activities were oriented on trying to work the coalition out of a job. The shift in emphasis to the non-combat efforts in 2011 also manifested the recognition by ISAF, which could be considered learning, that it could not achieve success through fighting. The character of this conflict was not one that international forces could win. An honorable withdrawal in 2014 depended on generating acceptable levels of competence in the ANA, ANP, and ministries, and among key local officials in the districts and provinces. The incremental shifts in the emphasis and activities of NTM-A, the PRTs, and OMLT/POMLTs indicated they were constantly learning and adapting (organizational capacity) as they never gave up trying to achieve coalition objectives. Some efforts were unsuccessful - the narcotics problem was unsolvable for the allies and coordination efforts with the Pakistani army did not eliminate periodic severely acrimonious strategic and political-level relations – but taken together they contributed to maintaining coalition cohesion during the transition and withdrawal.

The Transition

As previously mentioned, by the end of 2009, the allies were starting to think about withdrawal, the Alliance formally announced its transition plan in 2010, and in 2011 there were a number of public statements by contributing nations about their proposed timelines for drawing down forces, but ISAF’s general draw-down did not start until 2012. In the meantime, the surge in combat operations between 2009 and 2010 stopped the Taliban momentum¹⁹⁸ and provided the opportunity for the shift in the coalition’s main effort and the subsequent transition. During General McChrystal’s command of ISAF, he emphasized the need to fully partner with the ANSF. He believed the ANSF had to start standing on its own two feet, and stop being dependent on the coalition, if it was to assume responsibility

¹⁹⁷ “Pakistan’s border badlands: Double games,” *The Economist*, July 12, 2014; and “Pakistan’s militants: Taliban tumult,” *The Economist*, October 25, 2014.

¹⁹⁸ *Report on Progress Toward Security and Stability in Afghanistan, October 2011*, 3.

for security in the country.¹⁹⁹ Building competent security forces cannot be done overnight, however, and although the decisions to increase the end-strength of the ANA and ANP in 2010 and 2011 helped to ensure a positive correlation of forces against the insurgents during the transition, the most consequential phase of ANSF development had occurred 2003-2008, for this was when the entire training infrastructure was created and when the training, equipping, and integration of the ANSF forces that fought with the ISAF coalition in 2009-2010 occurred. General McChrystal and his successors were able to capitalize on the efforts of their predecessors when they implemented the shift in operational approach. They had increasingly competent Afghan forces which were ready to start becoming full partners and then leading because they had been repeatedly tested and blooded for years before 2009.

The security transition plan, called *Inteqal* (Dari and Pashtu for “transition”), depended on these competent ANSF forces. As with all other major decisions and actions related to Afghanistan, the various NATO bodies followed a deliberate decision and planning process for the security transition which was followed by ISAF operational action. In October 2009, the NATO defense ministers issued guidance and set planning criteria for subsequent detailed military planning. The idea was that the transition would be gradual and conditions based, and as it occurred ISAF would assume a supporting role and then progressively thin out its presence.²⁰⁰ It was also assumed that violence would endure throughout the process; the key was whether ISAF assessed the ANSF could handle the violence levels.²⁰¹ During the winter of 2010, NATO military authorities and the ISAF SCR provided advice on what the security, governance, and economic conditions should be. In April 2010, after consultation with the Afghan government, the NATO foreign ministers, at a ministerial in Tallinn, endorsed the proposed criteria and conditions.²⁰²

¹⁹⁹ McChrystal, *My Share of the Task*, 329, 334, 347.

²⁰⁰ NATO, “Backgrounder: Phase 4: Transition to Afghan ownership and leadership in security,” October 2009, <http://www.nato.int>.

²⁰¹ Barbara Starr, “Smooth transition will be key to bringing troops home from Afghanistan,” *CNN*, October 31, 2010.

²⁰² NATO, “Backgrounder: Transition,” April 2010, <http://www.nato.int>.

There were four general areas to be assessed as decisions were made on which cities, districts, and provinces were ready for transition: level of violence (can citizens conduct their routine daily activities?); level of development of local governance (does the rule of law exist and can local officials manage public administration?); level of socio-economic development (is it self-sustaining?); and the level of ANSF capabilities.²⁰³ Sources for the required data would be UNAMA, ISAF, the Afghan government, and other key civilian experts and stakeholders.²⁰⁴ The information was fed to the Joint Afghan NATO Inteqal Board (JANIB), which was established in July 2010. This body was tasked to make assessments and provide recommendations to President Karzai and his cabinet which would make the final decisions and announcements.²⁰⁵

In November 2010, the allies announced they were ready to enter the security transition phase at the NATO Summit in Lisbon. The implementation of the transition would be in phases, called *tranches*, which would occur between 2011 and 2014.²⁰⁶ In reality, the transition had already quietly begun when NATO announced the *Inteqal* plan, because the ANSF had taken over full responsibility for Kabul City in August 2008²⁰⁷ and a number of areas in the south and east were turned over to Afghan control in 2009 and 2010.²⁰⁸

ISAF was involved in assessing all of the areas. It was a complex endeavor that required gathering and compiling a wide range of data. Information and reports flowed upwards from the battle groups, PRTs, and OMLT/POMLTs to the RCs, which incorporated

²⁰³ Ibid., and NATO Media Backgrounder, "Transition to Afghan lead: *Inteqal*," December 2011, <http://www.nato.int>.

²⁰⁴ NATO, "Backgrounder: Transition: *Inteqal*," October 2010, <http://www.nato.int>.

²⁰⁵ NATO Media Backgrounder, "Transition to Afghan lead: *Inteqal*," December 2011. The JANIB was chaired by Ashraf Ghani the Chairman of the Transition Coordination Committee, and co-chaired by the ISAF Commander and the NATO Senior Civilian Representative. It included key Afghan, NATO, and ISAF stakeholders and a UN special representative; *Report on Progress Toward Security and Stability in Afghanistan, October 2011*, 55.

²⁰⁶ NATO, "Declaration by the Heads of State and Government of the Nations contributing to the UN-mandated, NATO-led International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) in Afghanistan," November 20, 2010, http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natolive/news_68722.htm.

²⁰⁷ NATO, "Final communiqué: Meeting of the North Atlantic Council at the level of Foreign Ministers held at NATO Headquarters, Brussels," December 3, 2008, http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/official_texts_46247.htm.

²⁰⁸ Barbara Starr, "In Afghanistan, small-scale security handovers quietly ensue," *CNN*, November 8, 2010.

relevant civil information (status of rule of law, governance, etc.) from local UNAMA and USAID representatives and NGOs, and then provided a regional assessment of which provinces, districts, and cities were ready to transition to IJC.²⁰⁹ A special department in IJC, called the “Campaign and Transition Assessment Group,” then worked with NTM-A to create three inter-related reports on a quarterly basis that they submitted to the ISAF Commander: a campaign assessment, a “Transition and Provincial Outlook Report,” and an assessment of ANSF development.²¹⁰ In effect, a durable security transition depended on positive developments in the three areas of the reports. A successful civilian-military operational campaign (in which Afghans were increasingly in the lead and operating unilaterally) would create the security conditions needed for sustainable governance and economic development in the districts and provinces, which would be supported over the long term by security forces that were institutionally self-sustaining.

President Karzai announced the first transition *tranche* March 22, 2011. It was expected the actual transition process for each *tranche* would play out over 12-18 months, but it could go faster based on specific conditions. For example, Bamiyan Province and the city of Mazar-e-Sharif came entirely under Afghan responsibility in July 2011. Karzai announced the second *tranche* November 27, 2011.²¹¹ To an extent the transition plan was tested by domestic events in the contributing nations. An attack on French forces that killed four and wounded 15 soldiers in January 2012 became a presidential election campaign issue and the French government indicated it would withdraw its combat forces before 2014. President Nicolas Sarkozy also proposed that NATO withdraw in 2013.²¹² The issue was addressed at the May 2012 Chicago Summit. In the end, the allies agreed they would stick with the overall transition plan and end the ISAF mission in December 2014 as originally

²⁰⁹ Colonel Uwe Hartmann, German Army.

²¹⁰ Lieutenant Colonel Joe Burger, U.S. Army (served as the Chief, Campaign Assessment Section, IJC, ISAF, Kabul, Afghanistan, July 2011-June 2012), interview with author at Carlisle Barracks, PA, November 12, 2013.

²¹¹ NATO Media Backgrounder, “Transition to Afghan lead: *Inteqal*,” December 2011; also NATO News, “Mazar after transition,” November 18, 2011, http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natolive/news_81069.htm.

²¹² Edward Cody and Karen DeYoung, “France will speed up troop withdrawal from Afghanistan by one year,” *Washington Post*, January 27, 2012.

planned, but they would also accommodate national troop withdrawal decisions and re-position the remaining forces as needed.²¹³ For the ISAF coalition, this generated the creation of new coordination processes to accommodate national withdrawal decisions. The withdrawal process required detailed logistical planning and intensive coordination among the ISAF headquarters, IJC, and the regional commands to ensure redeploying forces had the resources and logistical support they needed,²¹⁴ but also to ensure that ongoing operational activities were not impeded.

As *Inteqal* got underway, and individual nations began indicating their intention to withdraw their combat forces, the ISAF headquarters began to think about the coalition's overall withdrawal. Like the higher level NATO bodies, the ISAF commander and his staff also followed a deliberate decision and planning process for the draw-down and withdrawal, for it is no easy task to gradually reduce and move some 130,000 troops and their associated equipment out of a remote mountainous country. The ISAF commander hosted the first of a series of political-military planning conferences in early 2012 to begin discussing what ISAF and the coalition should look like in 2014. It included the regional commanders as well as senior leaders from ISAF headquarters, IJC, and NTM-A, and political representatives from the embassies of the contributing nations.²¹⁵ Once consensus was established on the "vision" for 2014, deliberate planning began for an organized, systematic build down.

The coalition's plans were submitted to JFC Brunssum for approval by the NAC. As combat forces thinned out in the regions and the command transitioned to a training and advisory posture, the staff structures also progressively thinned out and the ISAF headquarters, NTM-A, and IJC folded in on themselves. The major restructuring in 2013 included: moving command authority for the Regional Support Commands from NTM-A to

²¹³ NATO, "Press conference by NATO Secretary General Anders Fogh Rasmussen following the meeting on Afghanistan in Heads of State and Government format," May 21, 2012, http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natolive/opinions_87841.htm.

²¹⁴ *Report on Progress Toward Security and Stability in Afghanistan, December 2012*, 15.

²¹⁵ Lieutenant Colonel Charles Freeman, U.S. Army (served as the Deputy Director of Staff, ISAF, Kabul, Afghanistan, November 2011-January 2012), interview with author at Carlisle Barracks, PA, November 13, 2013.

the Regional Commands; splitting NTM-A and CSTC-A in September and making NTM-A a subordinate command of IJC while integrating CSTC-A into the ISAF headquarters staff. In July 2014, NTM-A was reduced to a staff directorate within IJC and then in November it was moved into the ISAF headquarters as a training department. In the fall of 2014, Regional Command-Southwest was subsumed back into Regional Command-South and all of the RCs were renamed “Train, Advise, and Assist Commands” (TAAC) (this was in preparation for the follow-on NATO mission). In December 2014, IJC was in-activated shortly before the ISAF mission was formally ended.²¹⁶ The remaining elements of the ISAF headquarters were re-flagged the Resolute Support Mission Command on January 1, 2015.²¹⁷

Throughout the security transition process and ISAF’s draw-down, the coalition maintained its cohesion. The mutual trust and confidence generated among the forces during the earlier phases of fighting endured, and in some cases expanded to include the Afghan partners.²¹⁸ The forces deployed to Afghanistan were proud of their mission.²¹⁹ The troops also understood COIN and stability operations take time. They displayed a level of patience and a sense of the long view that national governments often did not share.²²⁰ They could also see that over time progress was being made; they could see the results of the intensive training, mentoring, and partnering efforts in the increasingly competent ANSF. They believed the improvement would continue if they stuck at it.²²¹ By late 2012, one officer operating in the Spin Boldak region along the border with Pakistan referred to the Afghan *kandaks* as “true partners” and stated their COIN operations were “really just combined

²¹⁶ Colonel Lawrence Brown, U.S. Army (served as the CJ2 for NTM-A/CSTC-A and then as the Chief of Staff, NTM-A, ISAF, Kabul, Afghanistan, July 2013-July 2014), interview with author at Carlisle Barracks, PA, August 7, 2014.

²¹⁷ NATO, “Resolute Support Mission placemat,” June 2015, http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/topics_113694.htm.

²¹⁸ Colonel Romulusz Ruszin, Hungarian Army. Other officers interviewed agreed.

²¹⁹ One officer stated that German troops were proud to deploy to Afghanistan and that morale in his battle group was very high; Lieutenant Colonel Jürgen Prandtner, German Army. Almost all of the officers interviewed stated their tours in Afghanistan were the most satisfying in their careers.

²²⁰ Lieutenant Colonel Chris Mueller, U.S. Army; Colonel Robbie Boyd, British Army; Marlowe, “A Counterinsurgency Grows in Khost,” 23, 24; Gates, *Duty*, 492.

²²¹ Colonel Shane Gabriel, Australian Army; Colonel Ingrid Gjerde, Norwegian Army; Colonel Denis Tretinjak, Croatian Army; Colonel Alberto Vezzoli, Italian Army; Colonel Robbie Boyd, British Army.

operations” in which the Afghans led the operations and did all the talking at the local *shuras*.²²² At one point, Secretary Gates commented, that paradoxically, “The closer you get to the fight, the better it looks.”²²³

The confidence and security gains achieved by the troops influenced the commanders and other senior leaders, such as Secretary Gates and General Petraeus, who asked political leaders for time and patience.²²⁴ This in turn influenced political will. For example, General Petraeus convinced President Obama to give the COIN operations a little more time to produce results and not to withdraw the U.S. surge forces in the summer of 2011, as he had originally planned when he announced his surge in December 2009. As a result, the U.S. Marine surge forces withdrew from RC-Southwest in the summer of 2012. More importantly, the evolving security situation and the transition process also influenced political will. As previously mentioned, insurgent violence/attacks peaked in 2010. It then leveled off and slowly started to decrease. It dropped substantially in 2014; see Figure 3 below.

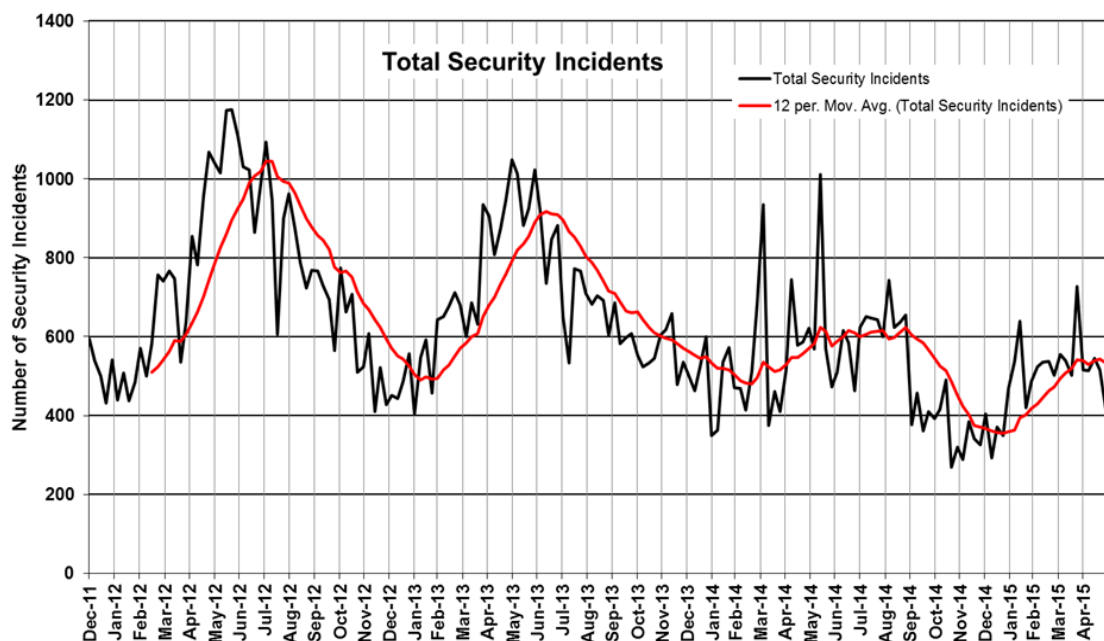


Figure 3: Weekly Reported Security Incidents, December 2011-May 2015 (source: Report on Enhancing Security and Stability in Afghanistan, June 2015).

²²² Lieutenant Colonel Timothy Davis, U.S. Army.

²²³ Gates, *Duty*, 561.

²²⁴ *Ibid.*, 480, 492.

At the same time, the ANSF was increasingly integrated into ISAF operationally and then took over. Through 2008 they had participated with the coalition. By 2009, they were becoming full partners, but ISAF was still in the lead for operational planning and execution. In 2010, ANSF started leading some operations and General Petraeus reported in his “review of progress” to the White House in October that the on-going operations in Kandahar were Afghan-led and some 60% of the forces were ANSF.²²⁵ By 2011, Afghans started to take responsibility for some operational planning, and with *Inteqal* the ANSF began taking full responsibility for security, to include operating unilaterally and independently in some areas. In 2012, the center of gravity for security shifted from ISAF to the ANSF. By the end of that year, ANSF was unilaterally conducting 80% of operations and it was leading 85% of total operations.²²⁶ As ANSF assumed security responsibility, IJC relinquished its operational planning role. *Operation Omid* was superseded by an Afghan campaign plan, published in January 2012, called *Operation Naweed* (Dari for “good news”) which integrated the Afghan army, police, and intelligence services in operations in all the regional commands “to protect the population and defeat the insurgency” over the course of 2012 and into 2013.²²⁷ *Operation Naweed* was further superseded by *Operation Oqab* (Dari for “eagle”) in 2013 as the ANSF shifted to a layered security approach.²²⁸

The center of gravity shift coincided with Karzai’s announcements of the third and fourth transition *tranches* in May and December 2012 (with these two phases, 23 of the 34 provinces entered transition and 87% of the population was secured by the ANSF).²²⁹ ISAF forces assumed an enabling role as Afghan forces assumed primary responsibility for security, and as a consequence the coalition members were much less involved in fighting the insurgents. As a result, coalition casualty rates dropped precipitously in 2013 and 2014; see Figures 4 and 5 below.

²²⁵ Ibid., 497.

²²⁶ *Report on Progress Toward Security and Stability in Afghanistan, December 2012*, 46.

²²⁷ Ibid., 11.

²²⁸ *Report on Progress Toward Security and Stability in Afghanistan, July 2013*, 13.

²²⁹ NATO Media Backgrounder, “Transition to Afghan lead: Inteqal,” June 2013, <http://www.nato.int>.

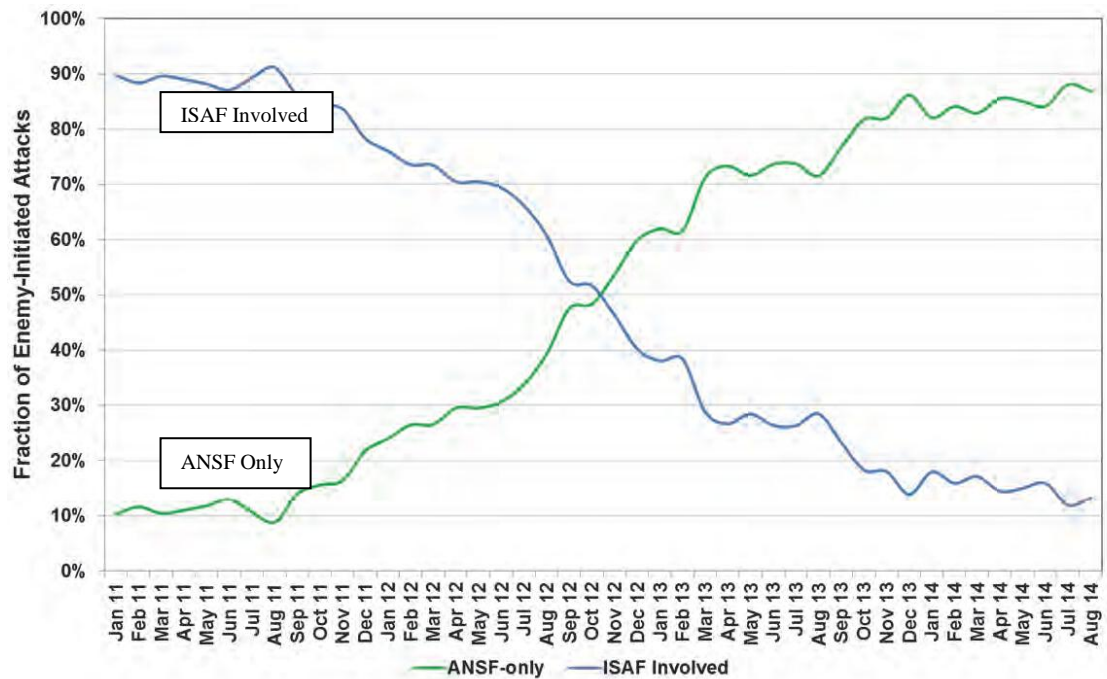


Figure 4: Percentage of Enemy-Initiated Attacks Involving ANSF and ISAF, January 2011-August 2014 (source: Report on Progress Toward Security and Stability in Afghanistan, October 2014).

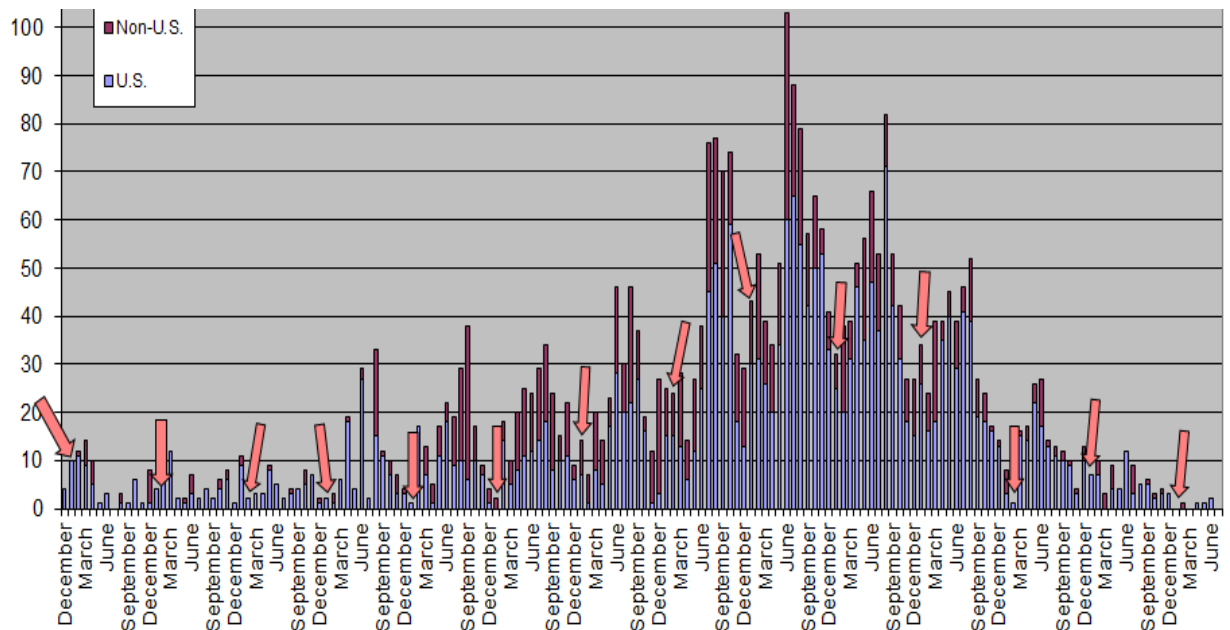


Figure 5: U.S. and Coalition Troop Fatalities, October 2001-June 2015 (note: arrows indicate the start of a new calendar year) (source: Afghanistan Index: Also including selected data on Pakistan, July 31, 2015).

The Taliban coalition was aware of the transition plan and it could be argued the insurgents intentionally reduced their violent activities as they waited for ISAF to withdraw. However, this was not how ISAF assessed the situation. Throughout the transition process,

the coalition continued to assess the insurgent coalition as resilient, although it shifted its tactics. It tried to avoid direct confrontation with the ANSF, relying instead on more IED use, high profile attacks, and soft target attacks (assassinations and kidnappings). Furthermore, it launched annual campaigns, 2011-2013, to regain territory and influence but they failed. ISAF attributed the declining violence and diminishing Taliban operational capabilities to ANSF capabilities and a continued high operational tempo (major operations actually increased 21% in 2012). As the ANSF took over security responsibility it focused on pushing insurgents out of densely populated areas and it demonstrated the ability to plan and carry out high-level kinetic operations. *Operation Kalak Hode V* in September 2012 exemplified the capability. The ANA's 205th Corps led this three-week operation comprised of 11,000 army and police forces in Zabul province. More importantly, the operation was logistically supported through Afghan supply channels. The 205th Corps repeated the large scale operation in *Kalak Hode VI* in 2013, but in Uruzgan. Afghan-led operations in key provinces in all the regions (including Paktia, Paktika, Ghazni, Khowst, Uruzgan, Kandahar, Helmand, Badghis, Faryab, Balkh, Kunduz, and Baghlan) over the years not only ensured the ANSF maintained security in the areas that transitioned, but also substantially improved the security of the large population centers (Kabul became one of the least violent areas of the country). ISAF noted that enemy attacks disproportionately occurred in rural areas.²³⁰

Regardless of the reason for declining insurgent violence, as ISAF involvement in operations and casualty rates decreased, it became politically easier for nations to stick to the transition plan announced at Lisbon in 2010 and reiterated in Chicago in 2012 and sustain their overall commitment into 2014. In the meantime, troop numbers decreased. In December 2012, ISAF forces numbered 102,011. In December 2013, they numbered 84,271, and by the end of 2014, they numbered 28,360.²³¹ Even casualty averse nations did

²³⁰ *Report on Progress Toward Security and Stability in Afghanistan, October 2011*, 6, 56-57, 59; *Report on Progress Toward Security and Stability in Afghanistan, April 2012*, 5; *Report on Progress Toward Security and Stability in Afghanistan, December 2012*, 1-5, 11, 18; *Report on Progress Toward Security and Stability in Afghanistan, July 2013*, 1-2.

²³¹ "International Security Assistance Force," ISAF Placemat, December 3, 2012, December 1, 2013, and November 7, 2014, <http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natolive/107995.htm>.

not have to worry about low public support because it was no longer a hot topic in the media. In many countries, Afghanistan fell out of the news headlines as coalition casualty rates dropped.²³² Singapore was the first country to completely withdraw its forces from Afghanistan in June 2013, which was the same month President Karzai announced the initiation of the fifth and final transition *tranche*.²³³ Canada was the second country to completely withdraw in March 2014. The remaining 48 participating nations continued to contribute some level of forces until December.²³⁴

National political will was sustained by the Alliance's and ISAF's organizational capacities and the coalition's operational achievements. The practices of consultation and cooperation at the higher strategic and political levels (at the NAC, SHAPE, and JFC Brunssum) provided top-down cohesion and they reflected the norm that had emerged at the tactical level on the battlefield that partners do not and should not precipitously abandon each other. Even when coalition members decided to withdraw forces (from either a specific region or Afghanistan altogether), they announced it in advance and they engaged with NATO's consultation processes and bodies. This strategic level activity generated subsequent operational level activity. ISAF was able to conduct deliberate multinational planning to shift other forces to fill the new gaps, when necessary. For example, the British re-positioning of forces in Helmand was conducted in coordination with the deployment of U.S. surge forces.²³⁵ The collapse of the Dutch coalition government in February 2010 ultimately resulted in the withdrawal of Dutch forces from Uruzgan in RC-South in August that year. However, the ensuing gap was filled by U.S., Australian, Slovak, and Singaporean forces, to include Australia taking over the PRT in Tarin Kowt.²³⁶ The ANSF took over security responsibility for Uruzgan Province in 2012 as part of *Tranche 3*. The Canadian

²³² Author observation of media reporting in the United States, UK, and France over the years. Also, both Colonel Jürgen Prandtner and Colonel Uwe Hartmann, German Army, stated there was very little media coverage of Afghanistan in Germany.

²³³ NATO Media Backgrounder, "Transition to Afghan lead: Inteqal," October 2014, <http://www.nato.int>.

²³⁴ "International Security Assistance Force," ISAF Placemat, June 24, 2013, April 1, 2014, and November 7, 2014, <http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natolive/107995.htm>.

²³⁵ Colonel Robbie Boyd, British Army.

²³⁶ Nicolas Delaunay, "Dutch troops to leave Afghanistan," *Agence France Presse*, July 28, 2010.

defense minister announced at a security forum in November 2010 that his government was considering whether to extend the combat mission of Canadian forces in Kandahar past 2011.²³⁷ It decided to end the mission in the summer of 2011, but U.S. forces stepped into the combat mission and also took over the PRT in Kandahar.²³⁸ Both the Dutch and Canadian combat forces ultimately stayed longer in Uruzgan and Kandahar than initially intended when they deployed in 2006. The original Dutch mandate was two years, but it was extended an additional two years “after fierce political debates”²³⁹ and the one-year Canadian mandate ultimately turned into five years.²⁴⁰ The Dutch and Canadian combat unit withdrawals did not mean the countries left Afghanistan. They both shifted their contributions to the training/advising missions. The Dutch contribution ranged between 500 and 200 troops between 2011 and 2014. Canada’s contribution ranged between 500 and 1,000.²⁴¹

NATO continued to support ISAF in multiple ways. In June 2009, the foreign ministers agreed to deploy AWACS to Afghanistan to provide air traffic control support to the coalition. The skies of Afghanistan had become increasingly full of civilian and military aircraft and unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs, commonly called drones), and the country did not have a network of ground-based radars to track them or coordinate their activities. The AWACS did it from the air. This helped ISAF with command and control of a critical area.²⁴² In addition, to keep up with the demands of the operational and training surges, SHAPE began holding force generation conferences every six months. It also convened special Afghanistan conferences, chaired by the Deputy SACEUR, to focus specifically on meeting the manning requirements for ISAF. The need for NTM-A trainers and OMLT and

²³⁷ Rob Gillies, “Canada considering staying in Afghanistan,” November 7, 2010, <http://www.afghanistannewscenter.com/news/2010/november/nov82010.html>.

²³⁸ Laura King, “Canada’s exit highlights Afghanistan challenges,” *Los Angeles Times*, July 16, 2011.

²³⁹ Martijn Kitzen, Sebastiaan Rietjens, and Frans Osinga, “Soft Power, the Hard Way: Adaptation by the Netherlands’ Task Force Uruzgan,” in Farrell, Osinga, and Russell, eds., *Military Adaptation in Afghanistan*, 160.

²⁴⁰ Stephen M. Saideman, “Canadian Forces in Afghanistan: Minority Government and Generational Change while under Fire,” *Ibid.*, 229.

²⁴¹ International Security Assistance Force, “ISAF Placemats between 2011 and 2014,” <http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natolive/107995.htm>.

²⁴² NATO, “Press conference by NATO Secretary General Jaap de Hoop Scheffer,” June 12, 2009.

POMLT teams was so huge and coordinating deployment rotations was so complex that special staff elements in NTM-A and IJC created matrices to literally track at the individual level what the manning requirements were, which requirements were the most important (which allowed the creation of prioritized lists), which countries were best suited to fill the requirements (which allowed informal discussions and negotiations before and on the sidelines of the conferences), which countries had committed to filling them, and whether, and when, the countries fulfilled the commitments. The staff elements worked very closely, almost on a daily basis, with SHAPE to ensure the “picture was the same” for leaders at the operational, strategic, and national levels.²⁴³ NATO continued to convene annual PRT conferences to harmonize activities and improve civil-military cooperation on the ground. In addition, it introduced special courses at the NATO School Oberammergau to help prepare deploying PRT members.²⁴⁴ SHAPE also published an “OMLT Concept of Operations” which standardized the tasks and functions of the teams and specified how they were to be organized, trained, and equipped.²⁴⁵ Finally, the Alliance’s training and education institutions capitalized on the knowledge and experience gained by officers on their deployments to Afghanistan. It became a normal operating procedure for redeployed officers to prepare and teach courses at the NATO SHAPE School in Oberammergau, or to provide training to the units undergoing mission rehearsal training at Stavanger, Norway or Bydgoszcz, Poland.²⁴⁶ Furthermore, the training centers in Norway and Poland had constant communication with the forces in Afghanistan which enabled them to provide “real world” information on the conditions in the country to deploying forces during their mission rehearsal and other training exercises.²⁴⁷ Alliance institutions essentially created a

²⁴³ Colonel Keith Detwiler, U.S. Army and Lieutenant Colonel Jeffrey Dickerson, U.S. Army. The official term for the manning requirements of a specific mission, like ISAF or KFOR, was Combined Joint Statement of Requirements (CJSOR).

²⁴⁴ Lieutenant Colonel Roman Nahoncik, “The Czech Provincial Reconstruction Team: Civil-Military Teaming in Logar Province” (strategy research project, U.S. Army War College, 2013), 8-9.

²⁴⁵ Colonel Shane Gabriel, Australian Army; Lieutenant Colonel, Arjan Hilaj, Albanian Army.

²⁴⁶ Colonel (retired) Phil Evans, U.S. Army; Colonel Doug Mastriano, U.S. Army; and Lieutenant Colonel Christopher Moretti, U.S. Army.

²⁴⁷ Information from Colonel Christopher Cardoni, U.S. Army and interviews of officers who deployed as part of the ISAF or RC headquarters or in battle groups or OMLTs.

continuous feed-back loop to the ISAF coalition to facilitate learning, improve training and educational programs, and develop doctrine or standards.

At the operational level, the ISAF commanders continued their efforts to improve ISAF's structural configuration and streamline command and control after 2010. For years, the activities of special forces had remained outside the operational control of OEF and ISAF commanders. Allied and U.S. special forces had what were called "tactical control" relationships with OEF and ISAF which meant CENTCOM and national governments retained overall decision authority over what the forces did. This was mainly due to the sensitive nature of direct action operations (which meant high level national government interest) but it also meant the battle space owners in the regions often did not know what they were doing. The decision to give the ISAF commander operational control of CJSOTF-A in 2010 improved the situation because special operations were then better coordinated with the ISAF and regional headquarters, as well as the battle space owners.²⁴⁸ However, the creation of ISAF SOF meant SF activities remained disjointed. Ultimately, the elements were incrementally merged together as ISAF's combat operations wound down and the transition began. In 2011, ISAF created the Deputy Commanding General-SOF position. This one-star general coordinated and synchronized the activities of the two SOF elements.²⁴⁹ In 2012, the elements and all SOF forces were merged into a new element, the NATO Special Operations Component Command-Afghanistan/Special Operations Joint Task Force-Afghanistan (NSOCC-A/SOJTF-A)²⁵⁰ (see Appendix 2). This final consolidation occurred as Afghan special forces took over the execution of SOF operations and the allied special forces stepped back into an advise and assist role.²⁵¹

The ISAF commanders also continued to have the leeway to institute new programs and initiatives. General McChrystal implemented an innovative program called the Afghanistan-Pakistan Hands Program in 2009. The concept was to develop a cadre of

²⁴⁸ Colonel Piotr Bieniek, Polish Army; Officer D; Officer E.

²⁴⁹ *Report on Progress Toward Security and Stability in Afghanistan, October 2011*, 8.

²⁵⁰ *Report on Progress Toward Security and Stability in Afghanistan, December 2012*, 12.

²⁵¹ Officer D.

several hundred U.S. officers who were trained in language (Dari, Pashto, or Urdu), culture, and history and then served in repetitive assignments in either Afghanistan or Pakistan, and in the Pentagon. It was thought they would develop and maintain personal relationships with the Afghans and Pakistanis they worked with, and that their deeper understanding of the politics and the people of the two countries would improve the coalition's execution of the comprehensive approach, as well as provide insights into the region that would be useful in the political-military policy-making processes in the United States. ISAF made good use of the officers as they started arriving in country in 2010, by assigning them to the ISAF headquarters, IJC, and NTM-A (where many worked ministerial outreach), in the regional commands, in PRTs, and in special forces teams, as well as embedding them into the local governance structures of the districts and provinces, however the U.S. military services did not establish assignment policies that utilized the officers in follow-on tours where their skills and knowledge could be used.²⁵² Thus, the American military bureaucracy limited the long-term benefits of a coalition initiative.

Despite ISAF's almost continual efforts to adjust organizational structures and operating procedures in order to improve its operational capabilities, it could not solve all of its problems and inefficiencies. One area in particular that could never be solved was intelligence. Many of the contributing nations established their own national intelligence centers in the country and they were often reluctant to share intelligence with others.²⁵³ In addition, due to issues related to the classification levels of intelligence (confidential, secret, and top secret), and release-ability (that is, some intelligence was U.S. only, some was release-able to NATO countries, and some to non-NATO countries), it was not possible for ISAF to establish one all-encompassing intelligence system/network that included all the contributing nations and linked together the regional commands, IJC, and the ISAF headquarters. As a result, a patchwork of parallel intelligence networks emerged across the country and intelligence officers had to develop ad hoc and innovative ways to ensure

²⁵² Lieutenant Colonel Eric Shafa, U.S. Air Force. Also, McChrystal, *My Share of the Task*, 307, 385-386.

²⁵³ Colonel Doug Mastriano, U.S. Army; Colonel Piotr Bieniek, Polish Army.

critical intelligence was provided to the people who needed it, such as operational forces in the field, colleagues in neighboring regional commands, and across the staffs.²⁵⁴ The coalition therefore had to learn to cope with a less than ideal situation in what could be considered a critical area, for good intelligence was necessary for effective operations and to minimize civilian casualties.

Despite persistent problems and inefficiencies from the strategic to the tactical levels, the coalition maintained its cohesion over time, due to the interaction of the two drivers of the analytical framework. Political will among the contributing nations not only endured for a variety of reasons derived from alliance and domestic politics, but also because the ISAF coalition's ability to deliver operational achievements sustained political confidence. The years of experience gained from operating together under difficult conditions and the ability to learn from mistakes generated a multitude of military changes and adaptations which incrementally improved the coalition's organizational capacity to achieve its objectives. The capacity for change and adaptation received a boost from the United States in 2009-2010 with the massive increase in troops and material resources. The surge in resources gave the coalition the means to create new organizational structures (IJC, NTM-A, and RC-Southwest), which facilitated realignments in the command and control configuration (ISAF commander could concentrate on strategic issues while IJC commander concentrated on operational activities; shift in C2 of OMLT/POMLTs and special forces improved coordination among the security, development, and governance lines of effort within the regions). The surge also enabled new operating procedures (embedded partnering, development of civilian-military campaign plan coordinated with the Afghans), new training initiative (such as NTM-A's literacy training), and new missions and programs (counter-narcotic operations, village stability operations, District Delivery Program, MoDA program, and ministry outreach). They also enabled a massive expansion in the scale of

²⁵⁴ Ibid., Also, Lieutenant Colonel Peter Whalen, U.S. Army; and Lieutenant Colonel Douglas Woodall, U.S. Army (served as Commander, 109th Military Intelligence Battalion, Regional Command-East, ISAF, Afghanistan, May 2012-February 2013), interview with author at Carlisle Barracks, PA, August 6, 2013.

operations and training. Taken together they improved the coalition's operational performance enough to beat back the insurgency and create the time and space necessary to develop Afghan capabilities. The incremental improvement in ANSF abilities meant they were ready to take the lead for security responsibility as the transition unfolded and the coalition could conduct an organized draw-down.

During the last few years of ISAF's existence, there were few forces fraying cohesion. British, Dutch, and French decisions to withdraw combat forces before 2014 could have opened the door to a general unraveling of the entire coalition, but they did not. The shift in emphasis to non-combat operations, the progressive assumption of security responsibility by the Afghans, and ISAF's shift to an enabling and support role meant the combat pressures were removed and the coalition could conduct an organized withdrawal. In the end, the Taliban coalition did not succeed in either forcing the withdrawal of international forces or overthrowing the Afghan government. Overall, one could say NATO achieved its objective of preventing Afghanistan from regressing back to becoming a safe haven for terrorism while it was engaged in ISAF.

By the time the ISAF mission was winding down in 2013, there were some impressive positive achievements: five million refugees returned to Afghanistan, more than eight million children were in school (more than a third of them girls), one in two Afghans had a cell phone, almost all Afghans had access to healthcare, the Taliban had less than 10% support, the majority of Afghans told pollsters they thought their country was on the right track, and Kabul was "bedlam of traffic" and "thriving small businesses."²⁵⁵ Furthermore, in 2012 a new phenomenon emerged in the rural areas of the east and northeast: independent uprisings of local tribes against the Taliban. It was called the "Andar Awakening" and it spread to the south, to include Kandahar, in 2013.²⁵⁶ Political, economic, and security conditions seemed to be on a positive trend.

²⁵⁵ Peter Bergen, "What Went Right?" *Foreign Policy*, March 2013.

²⁵⁶ Lieutenant Colonel Douglas Woodall, U.S. Army. Gordon Lubold, "Are We Winning in Afghanistan?" *Foreign Policy*, September 5, 2012; "Local Uprising Against Taliban Proving

But will this situation continue over the long term? It is an open question whether ISAF built enough ANSF capacity to hold off and ultimately defeat the Taliban coalition, while the international community assists the Afghan state to continue economic development and improve governance. It will only be continued security, economic, and governance improvements that will prevent regression in the future. As ANSF assumed responsibility for security during the transition, it could be argued that it was able to hold its own against the insurgent coalition only because it still received assistance from ISAF via the coalition's strategic enablers – particularly intelligence, close air support, transportation, and medical support. However, by 2014, the Afghan Air Force demonstrated a capacity to plan and execute “air operations including emergency extraction, emergency casualty evacuation, air reconnaissance and troop transport airlift with limited ISAF support.”²⁵⁷ The ANSF was on its way to developing some of its own enabler capabilities and it was striving to wean itself off ISAF dependence

As of 2014, Afghanistan still had major problems and challenges to overcome, ranging from institutional corruption, a lack of human capital and thus weak administrative capacity from district to province to capital level, endemic criminal activity (such as the narcotics trade) supported by robust illicit networks, and enduring tribal conflicts and tensions. Economic development needs were still massive. Government authority outside Kabul was still weak and regional “warlords” still too strong. But the peaceful transition of political power in 2014 with the election of President Ashraf Ghani was a positive development, even though the election process was a long, drawn-out affair.²⁵⁸ By 2014 and into 2015, there were still problems with attrition rates in the ANA and ANP but they

Effective,” *Washington Free Beacon*, March 21, 2013; and Bill Gertz, “Anti-Taliban Movement Gaining Strength in Afghanistan, U.S. Says,” *Washington Free Beacon*, July 12, 2013.

²⁵⁷ Jens Stoltenberg, *The Secretary General's Annual Report 2014* (Brussels: NATO Public Diplomacy Division, 2014), 7.

²⁵⁸ “The election in Afghanistan has delivered a powerful message at home and abroad,” *The Economist*, April 12, 2014; “Afghanistan's presidential election: stuffed,” *The Economist*, July 12, 2014; “Democracy, Afghan-style,” *The Economist*, September 27, 2014.

showed “resilience” and generally fought well against the insurgent coalition,²⁵⁹ so the ANSF seemed to have become a stable national institution. Furthermore, NATO members and partners recognized the ANSF remained dependent on international assistance and so the Alliance agreed to continue its support after 2014. At the Wales Summit in September 2014, the allies pledged three inter-related lines of engagement: the NATO-led Resolute Support mission to train, advise, and assist the ANSF; the provision of financial assistance to the ANSF through the ANA Trust Fund; and continuing consultation and cooperation through the NATO-Afghanistan Enduring Partnership.²⁶⁰ The Alliance’s involvement in Afghanistan would therefore continue for some years after the completion of the ISAF mission.

²⁵⁹ *Report on Enhancing Security and Stability in Afghanistan, June 2015* (Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Defense Report to Congress, 2015), 5, 57-58.

²⁶⁰ Stoltenberg, *The Secretary General’s Annual Report 2014*, 8-9.

CHAPTER 6

CONCLUSION

In March 2014, NATO Secretary General Rasmussen stated to a forum at the Brookings Institution that the Alliance's ISAF mission in Afghanistan was "the biggest and most effective coalition in recent history." Bringing together a quarter of the world's countries in the 50-member coalition, it was "a coalition that only NATO could have gathered and commanded."¹ However, building such a large coalition was not the Alliance's original intention and its ultimate activities were dramatically more ambitious and wide-ranging than the initial limited efforts to secure Kabul and assist the transitional Afghan government. Explaining how this happened brings this thesis back to its research question: *NATO was not initially involved in military operations in Afghanistan, but this changed slowly over time. First, it decided to take over ISAF in Kabul, and then it expanded ISAF, both geographically and operationally. ISAF then surged, followed by an organized withdrawal. Why did this happen and how did ISAF maintain coalition cohesion throughout the campaign in Afghanistan?*

While NATO's involvement in Afghanistan was ultimately precipitated by the September 11th terrorist attacks, it was not preordained or guaranteed. The Alliance had to deal with a new and complicated situation in 2001 and it took time to adjust to the new strategic environment. In fact, the initial default position for the allies was not to turn to the Alliance for operations in Afghanistan. A number of factors militated against action. Neither the Taliban government nor the al Qaeda terrorist organization presented a survival threat to the Alliance and its members. NATO's strategic culture at the time did not envision action so far from NATO territory (as its out-of-area remit was peripheral to Alliance territory) or the execution of such an ambitious regime-change mission. The conception of NATO's security role (when, how, and where the organization would employ military force) as expressed in its strategic culture meant the Alliance's organizational capacities were limited

¹ Secretary General Anders Fogh Rasmussen, "The Future of the Alliance: Revitalizing NATO for a Changing World," (Remarks at The Brookings Institution, Washington, DC, March 19, 2014).

– there had been no prior contingency planning to deal with a problem like transnational terrorism and the organization lacked the collective military resources to deploy and sustain combat forces far from allied territory. These organizational capacity limitations influenced national policy positions. In effect, the Alliance members lacked the collective political will to generate a decision to undertake combined action within NATO in the fall of 2001.

However, the dramatic shift in the strategic environment induced the allies to reconsider NATO's role and purpose and as such the Alliance gradually began to change as it incrementally involved itself in the multinational ISAF coalition. This thesis proposes that the factors, or drivers, of political will and organizational capacity, which derive from the social science literature on alliances, security organizations, and military change and adaptation, can be utilized to explain NATO's initial lack of involvement in Afghanistan, its decision to take over command of ISAF, and the coalition's dramatic transformation over time. More importantly, they can provide an explanation for the coalition's ability to generate and sustain cohesion in the midst of a conflict that escalated in violence and in the face of multiple forces that frayed cohesion.

In effect, NATO's involvement in Afghanistan and ISAF's transformation was a case of multinational military adaptation. However, developments were not as straightforward as this statement seems to suggest. As Theo Farrell has argued, "there is nothing natural or easy about military adaptation." War is a complex phenomenon and history has shown it is well nigh impossible for the combatants "to anticipate all of the problems they will face in the war." It is not unusual for them to misunderstand the challenges they face or underestimate the amount of resources needed. They can also learn the wrong lessons. Furthermore, since strategic culture frames how a military organization sees itself and sees the world and as such prescribes its range of legitimate actions, it can shape learning and "make some options for military change possible, and others impossible."² Nevertheless, the allies made the decision to undertake the ISAF mission in April 2003, after a significant

² Farrell, "Introduction," in Farrell, Osinga, and Russell, eds., *Military Adaptation in Afghanistan*, 3-5, 15.

shift in the Alliance's strategic culture – the first major adaptation after 9/11. It was an open-ended, out-of area decision that was unprecedented in the organization's history.

As chapter 3 argued, the decision was based on a perception of the character of the conflict that turned out to be flawed, and as the conflict changed ISAF struggled to find the right way to fight it. The coalition had to repeatedly reconsider what it was doing and how it was doing it. In the end, ISAF seemed to demonstrate it was a multinational coalition capable of learning as it successively changed and adapted its organizational structures and operations and incrementally expanded its activities. Furthermore, all of the NATO allies stayed engaged throughout the campaign (cohesion endured) and 22 partner nations joined the coalition even as ISAF eventually engaged in a wide range of unanticipated activities that included counter-terrorism, counter-insurgency, and counter-narcotics operations, as well as training and mentoring activities. This process of change and adaptation was persistently challenged by a multitude of fraying forces that worked to undermine cohesion.

That fact that cohesion endured was surprising. As chapter 1 stated, given the negative historical experiences of alliances and coalitions, the low stakes involved in the war for the allies and partners, the inconclusive nature of the conflict against the Taliban, the fact that today for many European countries war is considered an illegitimate means for resolving international differences, one could argue the ISAF coalition should have fallen apart. The forces fraying cohesion included: intra-alliance tensions over burden-sharing; disagreements about what ISAF should do; concerns about U.S. unilateralism; reluctance to get involved in combat operations or remain engaged over the long term; and operational inefficiencies from restrictive national caveats and resource, training, and doctrinal shortfalls that led to inconclusive tactical operations which produced a widespread perception the international effort was a failure. However, unexpectedly, the coalition did not fracture and cohesion endured under adversity. The drivers and influences in the proposed analytical framework can provide an explanation for why and how this happened.

Since NATO is not an autonomous security organization, there must be a convergence in political will among the members in order for action to occur. In this case,

the allies eventually reached consensus on the proposal for NATO to take over the ISAF mission. As chapter 3 noted, finding volunteers for the first three ISAF rotations was not easy or straightforward and by the spring of 2003 nations were not eagerly lining up to lead a rotation. However, the allies shared a view of the dangers posed by transnational Islamic terrorism. The sanctuary provided by Afghanistan to Islamic terrorists had facilitated a multitude of attacks in Europe and around the world by al Qaeda and its affiliates. Combined with the large number of foiled plots, and the extensive, interconnected terrorist networks uncovered by European police and security services in almost every country in Western Europe, allied governments understandably assessed they were under attack. The security threat was potentially real and this was a major influence in generating the Alliance decision. Preventing Afghanistan from reverting back to becoming a safe haven for transnational Islamic terrorists was an objective the allies agreed with, but this would require nation-building, of which ISAF was a key part. Engaging NATO solved the problem of ISAF and it meant the coalition's mission became a collective effort rather than an individual effort.

However, political will was not only based on the assessment of the jihadist threat. Ultimately, political will was derived from a variety of influences, and in fact national reasons to contribute to the coalition, and stay engaged, eventually seemed to develop into a complex mosaic based on intertwined domestic and alliance politics. Many countries had more than one reason to contribute. While the mission was seen as legitimate from a moral and humanitarian perspective – it was the right thing to do especially since the country had been abandoned after the Soviet-Afghan war - participation in the coalition was also a means to achieve other objectives, for both allies and partner nations. For many countries, their reputation in NATO mattered. So they joined the ISAF coalition and then stayed through the tough period because they wanted to be seen as reliable allies. They did not want to be seen as quitters or shirkers. For example, the reasoning for Canada's decision to deploy into Kandahar was articulated by a senior Canadian foreign affairs official who stated, "The decision to go to Kandahar was a collective one . . . We didn't do it because

someone in NATO wanted us to do it, or because the Americans made us do it . . . We did it because Afghanistan was a serious issue, we were a serious country . . . and we were determined to behave accordingly.”³ Countries like Canada, Italy, and Spain wanted to be taken seriously as top tier nations in the international community. NATO aspirants wanted to show their value to the Alliance in order to improve their chances of membership and new members wanted to fulfill the obligations of membership and show they would not be free-riders. Some countries joined or stayed out of a desire to improve their relations with the United States or just out of loyalty to the United States. Loyalty to NATO and loyalty to the allies and partners operating together in Afghanistan was widespread. Members of the coalition wanted ISAF to succeed and, more importantly, they came to believe that ISAF could not afford to be defeated by the insurgent coalition. The credibility of the Alliance was on the line, especially after tens of thousands of troops had been committed and after ISAF had demonstrated it could defeat large, organized Taliban attacks in 2006. Premature withdrawal and defeat after the investment of so much blood and treasure would be taken by the jihadists as a strategic victory against the international community on par with the Soviet-Afghan war, and it would lead to worsening instability in the region. The mutually reinforcing reasons for enduring political will, in the face of often acrimonious tensions among the allies and partners, provided a degree of top-down cohesion to the coalition, but they did not prevent many countries from skimping on resourcing. Most of the countries were reluctant, or were unable, to increase troops and material capabilities as the conflict escalated, which made it much more difficult for the coalition to achieve its operational objectives.

Political will, and national commitment, was sustained by organizational capacity. The ISAF coalition was deeply multinational with most units and all major operations comprised of multiple nations. The inter-weaving of units and specialist capabilities forced the allies to rely on each other. Over time, as the forces gained experience from training and operating together, familiarity, mutual trust, and confidence increased amongst the coalition

³ Bercuson and Granatstein with Mackie, *Lessons Learned?* 21.

partners. This tactical and operational-level bonding generated the norms and practices that partners do not abandon each other, especially in adversity. As stated in chapter 4, “the heat of battle” acted as an incubator of cohesion. In addition, NATO’s strategic-level consultation and planning bodies developed forums and processes for multinational coordination that reinforced the norm against abandonment. National decisions, to increase, withdraw, or reposition forces were announced in advance which allowed deliberate planning within ISAF to position forces where they were most needed, or to fill gaps, when necessary. In addition, the coalition experiences on the ground facilitated its learning.

In general, learning occurred within the coalition, at NATO, and within national militaries as the character of the conflict shifted. Some nations learned faster than others which ensured wide gaps in capabilities endured among the partners and allies – this contributed to the persistent tensions over burden-sharing. Nevertheless, as noted in chapters 3-5, military change and adaptation efforts from learning and experience generated new operating procedures and new organizational structures as the coalition slowly expanded its operations from the initial limited stabilization and reconstruction activities centered in Kabul and the PRTs. As the coalition recognized it had a real fight on its hands in 2006, it undertook counter-insurgency operations, and expanded its training and advising activities. It also eventually undertook unexpected missions, such as counter-narcotics operations. The change and adaptation efforts produced operational results. As noted in chapters 4 and 5, ISAF forces were successful in every engagement against the Taliban coalition, which helped to sustain political-level confidence in the deployed forces. However, force levels were often only just sufficient in the years between 2006 and 2008 to combat the insurgency and commanders were forced to rely extensively on overwhelming direct and indirect fire support. This resulted in levels of collateral damage that eroded Afghan support. This in turn led senior level commanders to press for more resources and more forces, in order to sustain the hard won gains achieved by the troops, but also to build on them. This bottom-up pressure sustained cohesion and ultimately influenced national policy, the most visible

decision being the U.S. surge which carried the coalition through the transition and withdrawal.

It can be argued the interaction of political will and organizational capacity went through three phases between 2003 and 2014. The first phase was 2003-2005. The convergent political will that generated the allied decision to take over ISAF and then expand its footprint around the country was based on a set of perceptions and assumptions about the conflict. Because violence levels were generally low, the allies perceived the conflict was largely over. Most of the existing violence and combat activity was in the east, but the U.S.-led OEF operation was taking care of it. The ISAF coalition therefore assumed all it had to do was help the Afghans get on their feet and it could do it through stabilization and reconstruction activities that would include securing Kabul, assisting security sector reform activities, and taking over and expanding the number of PRTs in the regions. The mission, therefore, was similar to the peace operations the Alliance had undertaken in SFOR and KFOR in that military efforts were meant to provide a safe and secure environment so that political, civil, economic, and reconstructions activities could proceed. What came to be called ISAF's comprehensive approach at the Riga Summit in 2006 had long been practiced in NATO operations in the Balkans where civil and military authorities endeavored to coordinate security, economic, and governance lines of effort, as noted in chapter 2. However, despite the massive involvement of governmental and non-governmental organizations in Afghanistan, the ISAF coalition found it had to engage in the non-military lines of effort. This led to an expansion in ISAF's activities that ultimately went far beyond what SFOR and KFOR had done. In addition, the successive SFOR and KFOR command headquarter rotations gave the Alliance's standing military formations operational experience that was useful for, and was repeated in, ISAF. For ISAF and Afghanistan, therefore, the Alliance seemed to have a well-developed organizational capacity, based on its prior experiences and operations in the Balkans, to take over what seemed to be a relatively straightforward mission. This organizational capacity gave the coalition confidence it could execute the mission and it reinforced political will and commitment,

thus generating cohesion. However, the perception of the conflict was wrong. Violence levels were low during this period because the Taliban coalition was reconstituting itself in Pakistan. Coalition force levels, in both ISAF and OEF, were insufficient to secure the population and the generation of ANSF forces, army and police, was also not sufficient to provide security. The ensuing security vacuum throughout the country proved beneficial to the Taliban coalition as it executed its own campaign to return to Afghanistan. Its ability to launch offensive operations in 2006 changed entirely the character of the conflict and put tremendous pressure on the ISAF coalition.

The second phase for the coalition, 2006-2008, was thus driven by the Taliban. The uncontested and methodical nature of ISAF's expansion into RC-North and RC-West, in 2004 and 2005, was nothing like what the coalition encountered as it expanded around the rest of the country in 2006. Contrary to coalition expectations that it would carry on with stabilization, reconstruction, and development activities, the allies and partners that deployed into RC-South in 2006 found themselves facing a full-blown, well-established insurgency which meant they could not avoid combat operations as the Taliban coalition launched a number of large organized attacks. The shock of combat shattered the perceptions and assumptions of the coalition. A number of potentially destructive fraying forces severely tested the strength of political will and the coalition's capacity to learn and adapt to the changed character of the conflict. They included the pressure of high-intensity combat operations and intense intra-alliance acrimony about burden-sharing due to the unwillingness of major allies to deploy into the south and engage in combat. However, rather than fracturing, the coalition held together and fought back. The primary strategic driver sustaining collective political will and thus cohesion was fear of the consequences of failure. ISAF could not afford to be defeated by the insurgent coalition because of the repercussions such a major operational failure would have on the Alliance as a whole. The political commitment was sustained by the coalition's organizational capacity to adapt to the changed military conditions. ISAF shifted its operational approach as it undertook counter-insurgency operations and expanded its training activities. It replicated its experiences in

SFOR and KFOR as it distributed operational forces into the regional commands as multinational task forces. Commanders also repeatedly pressed for more resources and to an extent national governments provided them. ISAF force levels increased from 9,000 in the spring of 2006 to 51,100 by November 2008. While the coalition demonstrated its operational competence because it defeated the Taliban whenever it attacked, the force levels were insufficient to achieve victory and the conflict settled into a stalemate by 2007-2008. Operational effectiveness was also undermined by the resistance of some allies to combine OEF and ISAF. For domestic political reasons, they wanted to maintain a distinction between OEF (perceived as oriented on offensive combat although it also included CSTC-A's training mission) and ISAF (peacekeeping), but this was increasingly meaningless as both coalitions undertook COIN operations, supported security sector reform activities, mentored and operationally partnered with the ANA, trained the ANSF, and conducted PRT activities. The disjointed nature of the command and control configurations and the overlapping OEF and ISAF operations needed to be addressed, but it took until 2009 for further change to occur.

The third phase, 2009-2014, developed as the coalition recognized something needed to change; it was in an untenable position. In the course of intensive consultations and strategic reviews at the operational, strategic, and national levels in 2008-2009, the allies and partners thought through what organizational and operational changes needed to be made in order to improve ISAF's operational effectiveness (it was evidence of the coalition trying to learn from experience). The change in U.S. administration and the drawdown of forces in Iraq generated the means for significant changes in the ISAF coalition. For domestic political reasons, the new U.S. administration decided to substantially increase its contributions, in both personnel and material resources, and take a leading role in the coalition. This U.S. decision to assume the preponderance of the operational burden held the coalition together at a critical time. The U.S. surge, which was accompanied by increases in allied and partner forces and a major effort to generate ANSF forces, facilitated significant changes in ISAF's organizational structures, multiple

adaptations in its operating procedures, and an expansion in its activities as the allies and partners agreed to fully merge OEF and ISAF. In addition, the president's announcement the surge was only temporary and that combat operations would end by 2014 opened the door for the allies and partners to start overtly thinking about and planning the ISAF withdrawal. Taken together, the national decisions to surge forces, in conjunction with the merging of OEF and ISAF and the creation of the intermediate commands of IJC and NTM-A, finally gave ISAF the capacity to develop, coordinate, and execute a comprehensive civil-military campaign plan that brought together the counter-terrorism, counter-insurgency, stabilization and reconstruction, and training and mentoring efforts in a coherent way. These improvements in the coalition's organizational capacities also gave it the ability to execute operations that were significant orders of magnitude larger than all previous operations and they produced operational results – the Taliban were beaten back. The surge, then shift in emphasis to the non-combat efforts, also created the conditions needed for the ANSF development and over time the coalition was aided by an increasingly competent ANSF which was ready to start taking over security responsibilities by 2011. The enduring political will reflected in the surge of resources was supported by the coalition's capacity to deliver operational achievements and together they sustained cohesion. This helped carry the coalition through the toughest phase of the fighting, the security transition, the gradual drawdown of forces, and the end of the ISAF mission.

The decisions and changes that occurred during the third phase also meant ISAF had significantly transformed over time. From a small multinational coalition with a limited mission in 2003 that was comprised of a small headquarters (240 personnel), a multinational brigade in Kabul, and an airport task force, it had evolved into a massive multinational coalition by 2009-2010 with wide-ranging and ambitious missions. Its operational command and control structures included a much larger headquarters (2,200 personnel) supported by the IJC and NTM-A (another 1,900 personnel) in Kabul, as well as five regional commands, scores of multinational battle groups in the regions, hundreds of OMLT/POMLT teams, and 28 PRTs. The military changes and adaptations undergone by the coalition and by NATO

had included new strategies, new organizational structures, new missions, new ways of fighting and operating procedures, new doctrine, and new exercise, training, and educational programs.

In the end, the pressures of the conflict and the various fraying forces were not sufficient to fracture the coalition to the point of dissolution due to the combined interaction of political will and organizational capacity which generated and sustained the cohesion necessary to hold everyone together. While there was no overt free-riding (all the allies contributed), there was shirking. Many allies contributed just enough to be respectable. This produced the catching-up character of ISAF operations through much of the conflict and meant combat operations were harder for the allies. Still, the unprecedented commitment ultimately led to a 50-nation coalition engaged in a diverse range of missions to achieve a hugely ambitious objective in Afghanistan. It could even be argued that given all the negative pressures, the allies and partners stayed engaged much longer than anyone could have expected.

NATO's extensive commitment in Afghanistan does not mean it will continue to undertake this type of mission in the future. It can be argued the exhaustive effort in Afghanistan was a factor in NATO not getting involved in Libya after *Operation Unified Protector* and the fall of Muammar Qadhafi's regime, and why it has not gotten involved in the disintegrating Middle East to date.

As NATO transitioned out of Afghanistan, the international security environment continued to evolve. The dangers posed by non-state actors, transnational Islamic terrorists, failed states, and ungoverned spaces were joined by the re-emergence of Russia as a security threat. Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg noted in his 2014 *Annual Report* that "Russia has used military force to annex Crimea, destabilise eastern Ukraine, and intimidate its neighbors."⁴ Furthermore, it utilized a hybrid form of warfare in Ukraine, integrating proxies, the separatists in eastern Ukraine, and a sophisticated information/propaganda campaign with the deployments of conventional forces to achieve its security interests. This

⁴ Stoltenberg, *The Secretary General's Annual Report 2014*, 3.

made it harder for NATO (and the EU) to respond. So while NATO might not be willing to or be interested in getting involved in another state-building operation in North Africa or the Middle East, it cannot “revert” back to a strategy that prepares for defensive conventional war against its traditional enemy in the event deterrence fails. It will have to continue to adapt if it is to remain useful and relevant to its members. Its history indicates that it is possible.

APPENDIX 1: ACRONYMS

ABP: Afghan Border Police

ACE: Allied Command Europe

ACLANT: Allied Command Atlantic

ACO: Allied Command Operations

ACT: Allied Command Transformation

ADZ: Afghan Development Zones

ALP: Afghan Local Police

AMF: Afghan Military Forces

ANA: Afghan National Army

ANAP: Afghan National Auxiliary Police

ANCOP: Afghan National Civil Order Police

ANDS: Afghanistan National Development Strategy

ANP: Afghan National Police

ANSF: Afghan National Security Forces

APPF: Afghan Public Protection Force

ARRC: Allied Rapid Reaction Corps

ASFF: Afghanistan Security Forces Fund

AU: African Union

AUP: Afghan Uniformed Police

AWACS: Airborne Warning and Control System

CENTCOM: Central Command

CFC-A: Combined Forces Command-Afghanistan

CFSOCC-A: Combined Forces Special Operations Component Command-Afghanistan

CHLC: Coalition Humanitarian Liaison Cell

CIMIC: Civil-Military Coordination

CJCMOTF: Combined Joint Civil-Military Operations Task Force

CJSOTF-A: Combined Joint Special Operations Task Force-Afghanistan

CJTF: Combined Joint Task Force

CMOC: Civil Military Operations Center

CNPA: Counter-Narcotics Police of Afghanistan

COIN: Counter-insurgency

CSCE: Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe

CSTC-A: Combined Security Transition Command-Afghanistan

CTF: Combined Task Force

CTP: Counter-Terrorism Police

DDP: District Delivery Program

DDR: Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration

DPC: Defense Planning Committee

EAPC: Euro-Atlantic Partnership Council

EC: European Community

ETT: Embedded Training Team

EU: European Union

EUPOL: European Union Police (training program)

FATA: Federally Administered Tribal Areas

FDD: Focused District Development

FOB: forward operating base

GIRoA: Government of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan (after 2001)

HiG: Hizb-i-Islamic Gulbuddin (Hekmatyar's group)

IDLG: Independent Directorate of Local Governance

IED: Improvised Explosive Device

IFOR: Implementation Force

IJC: ISAF Joint Command

ISAF: International Security Assistance Force

JCMB: Joint Coordination and Monitoring Board

JFC: Joint Force Command

JSOTF: Joint Special Operations Task Force

KFOR: Kosovo Force

KLA: Kosovo Liberation Army

KMTC: Kabul Military Training Center

LOTFA: Law and Order Trust Fund for Afghanistan

MAT: Military Advisory Team

MEDEVAC: medical evacuation

MOD: Ministry of Defense

MoDA: Ministry of Defense Advisors (program)

MOI: Ministry of Interior

NAC: North Atlantic Council

NACC: North Atlantic Cooperation Council

NATO: North Atlantic Treaty Organization

NDS: National Directorate of Security (the Afghan domestic intelligence agency)

NRDC: NATO Rapid Deployable Corps

NRF: NATO Response Force

NSOCC-A: NATO Special Operations Component Command-Afghanistan

NTM-A: NATO Training Mission-Afghanistan

NWFP: North West Frontier Province

OEF: Operation Enduring Freedom

OMC-A: Office of Military Cooperation-Afghanistan

OMLT: Operational Mentoring and Liaison Team

OSC-A: Office of Security Cooperation-Afghanistan

OSCE: Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe

PAG: Policy Action Group

PAT: Police Advisory Team

PfP: Partnership for Peace

PMT: Police Mentoring Team

POMLT: Police Operational Mentoring and Liaison Team

PRT: Provincial Reconstruction Team

RC: Regional Command

SACEUR: Supreme Allied Commander Europe

SCR: Senior Civilian Representative

SFAT: Security Force Assistance Team

SFOR: Stabilization Force

SHAPE: Supreme Headquarters Allied Powers Europe

SOF: Special Operations Forces

SOJTF-A: Special Operations Joint Task Force-Afghanistan

STANAG: Standardization Agreement

STANAVFORLANT: Standing Naval Force Atlantic

STANAVFORMED: Standing Naval Force Mediterranean

TNSM: Tehriq-e-Nifaz-e-Shariat-e-Mohammedi

TTP: Tehrik-i-Taliban-i-Pakistan

UN: United Nations

UNAMA: United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan

UNSCR: United National Security Council Resolution

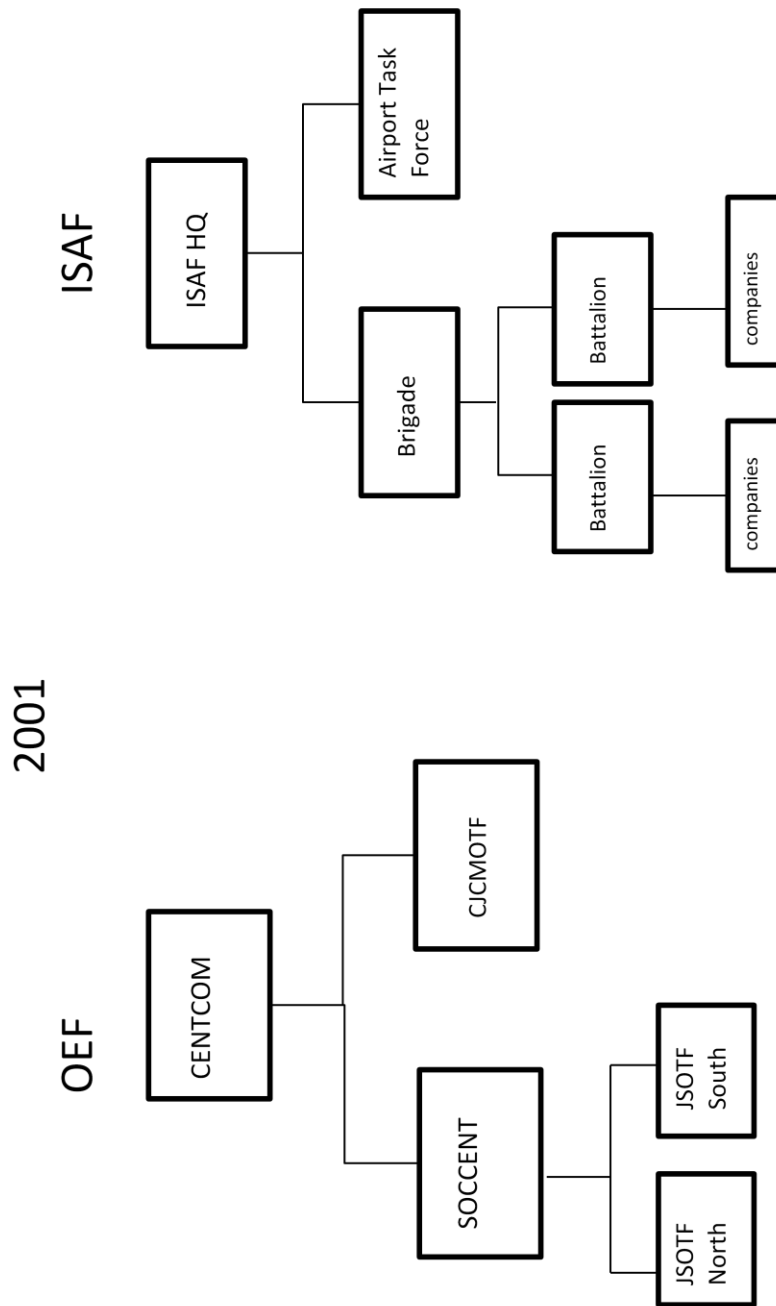
USAID: United States Agency for International Development

USFOR-A: U.S. Forces-Afghanistan

WEU: Western European Union

WMD: weapons of mass destruction

APPENDIX 2: COMMAND STRUCTURES (OEF AND ISAF)



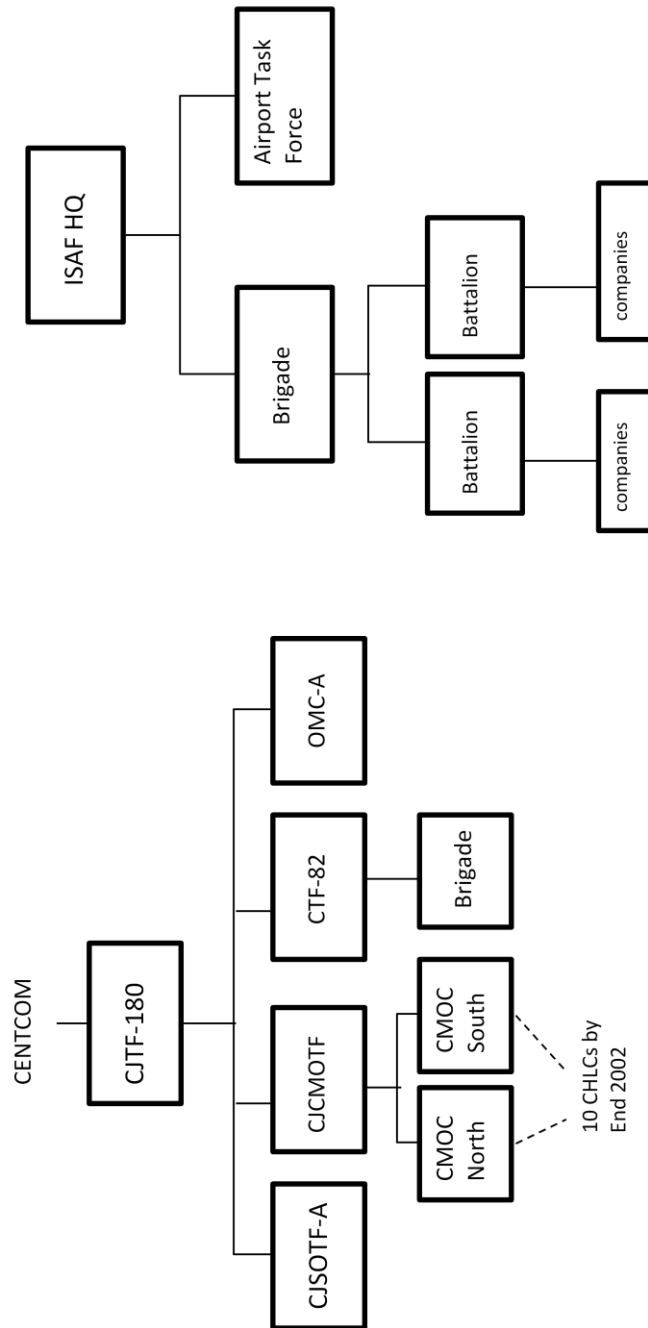
Notes:

- All diagrams show only the major command structures of OEF and ISAF. They also show overall lines of command and control; they do not distinguish between operational control (OPCON) or tactical control (TACON) relationships.
- JSOTFs conducted combat operations.
- CJCMTF established December 2001; conducted humanitarian assistance.
- ISAF established December 2001; assisted Afghan Interim Authority; secured Kabul; and facilitated reconstruction.

2002

OEF

ISAF



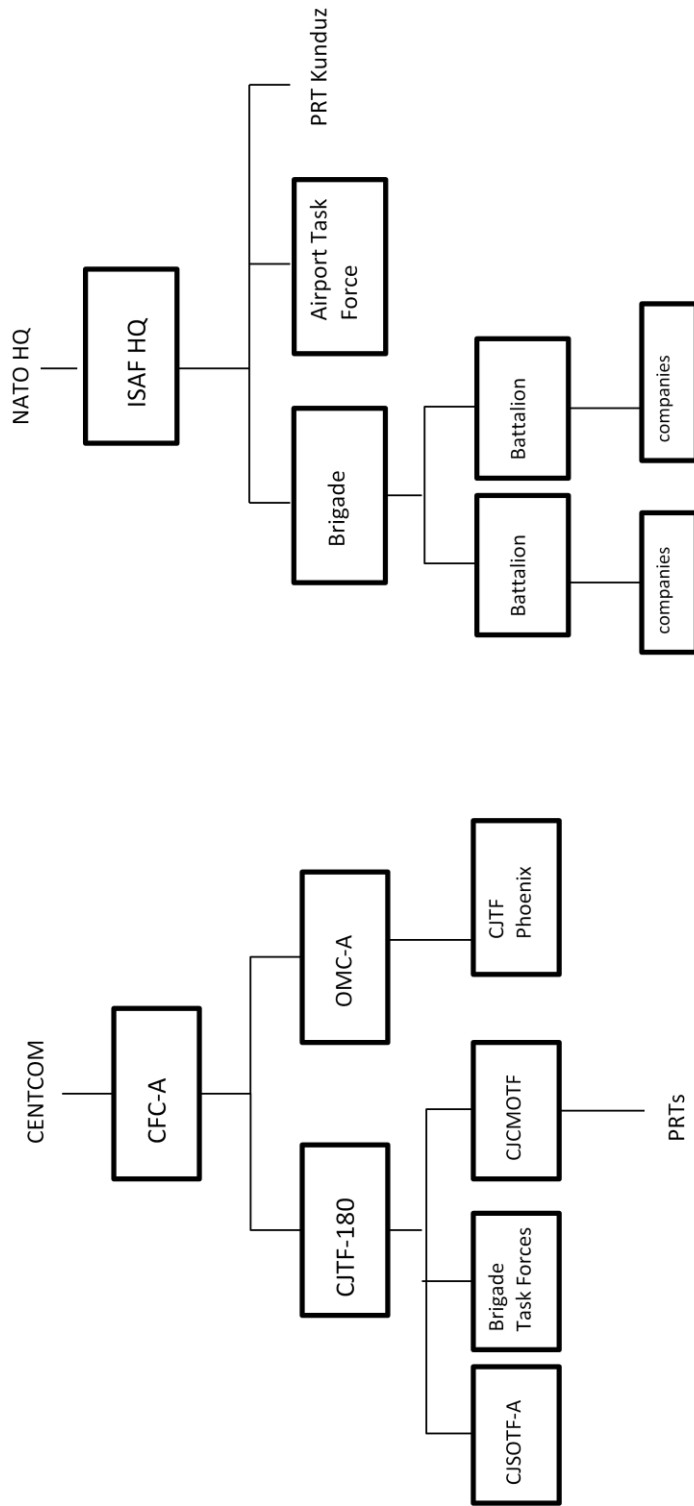
Notes:

- JSOTF North and South subsumed into CJSTOF-A.
- OMC-A established February 2002; responsible for security sector reform; conducted training and mentoring of ANA.
- CJTF-180 established May 2002; command responsible for security, stabilization, reconstruction, and training.
- CTF-82 established summer 2002; conducted security operations.
- CJCMOTF started conducting reconstruction as well as humanitarian assistance via ten CHLCs.
- PRT concept proposed to President Karzai fall 2002; plan developed fall 2002.
- December 2002: Afghan government and coalitions agree on goal of creating 70,000 soldier ANA and 62,000 ANP by 2006.

2003

OEF

ISAF



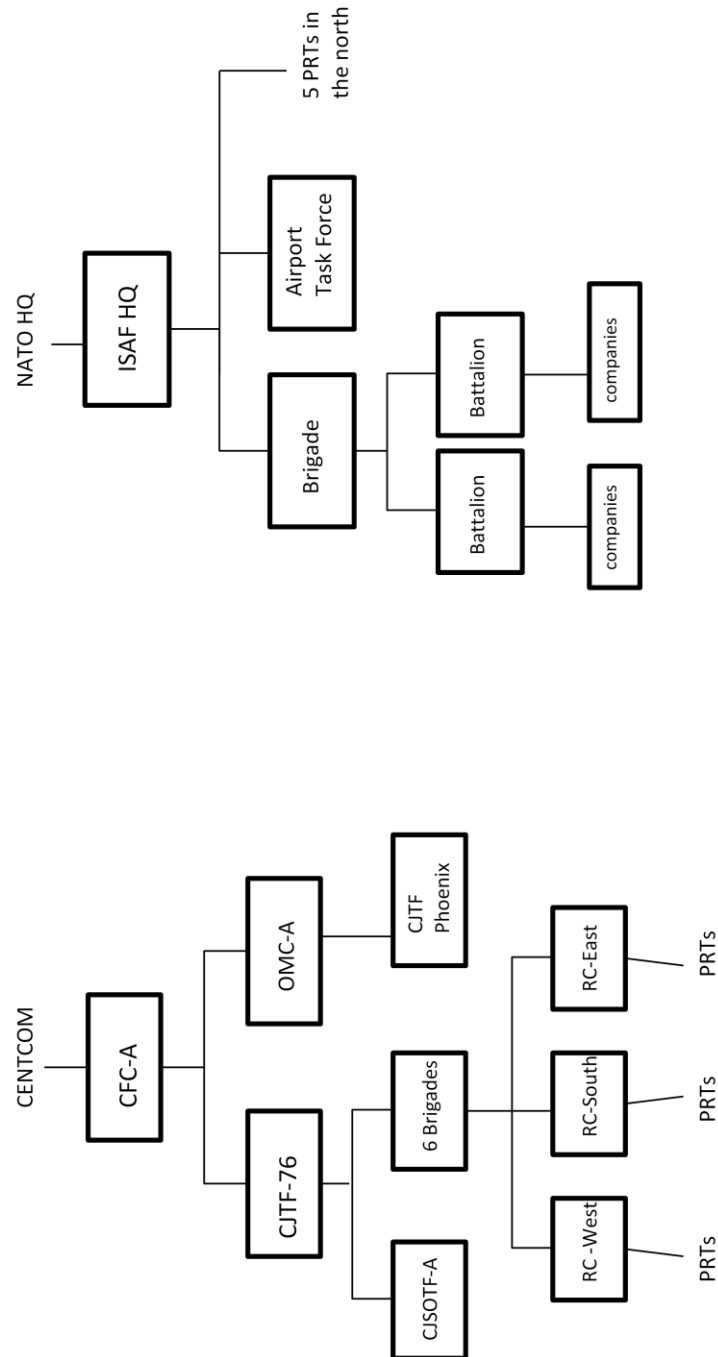
Notes:

- NATO took over ISAF in August 2003; began expansion by taking over PRT Kunduz in December 2003.
- CJTF Phoenix established June 2003; conducted ANA training and mentoring.
- CFC-A established October 2003; started conducting COIN in fall 2003.
- CMOs and CHLCs de-activated since PRTs created.
- Afghan Central Corps (201st Corps) activated in Kabul.
- 8 PRTs by end 2003.

2004

OEF

ISAF

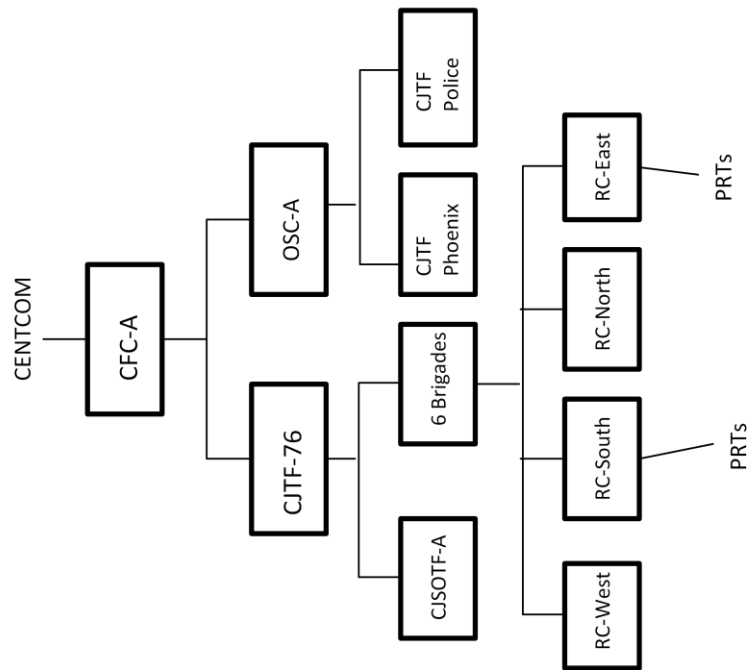


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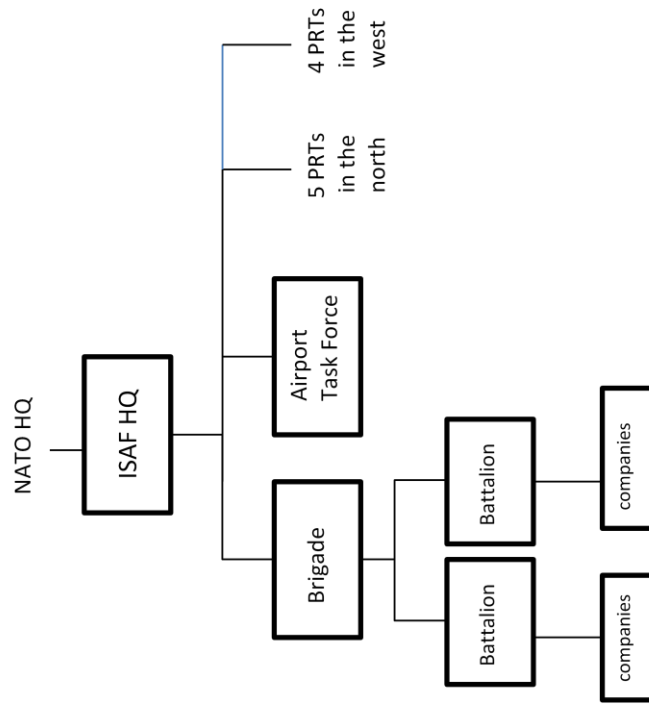
- CIMOTF deactivated when PRTs came under RC control.
- CJTF-180 renamed CJTF-76 with HQ rotation in April 2004.
- RC-South and RC-East HQs established May 2004; RC-West HQ established September 2004.
- ISAF expanded into the north by taking over 5 PRTs.
- 19 PRTs by end 2004.
- Four regional ANA Corps activated: 203rd in Gardez, 205th in Kandahar, 207th in Herat, and 209th in Mazar-e-Sharif

2005

OEF



ISAF

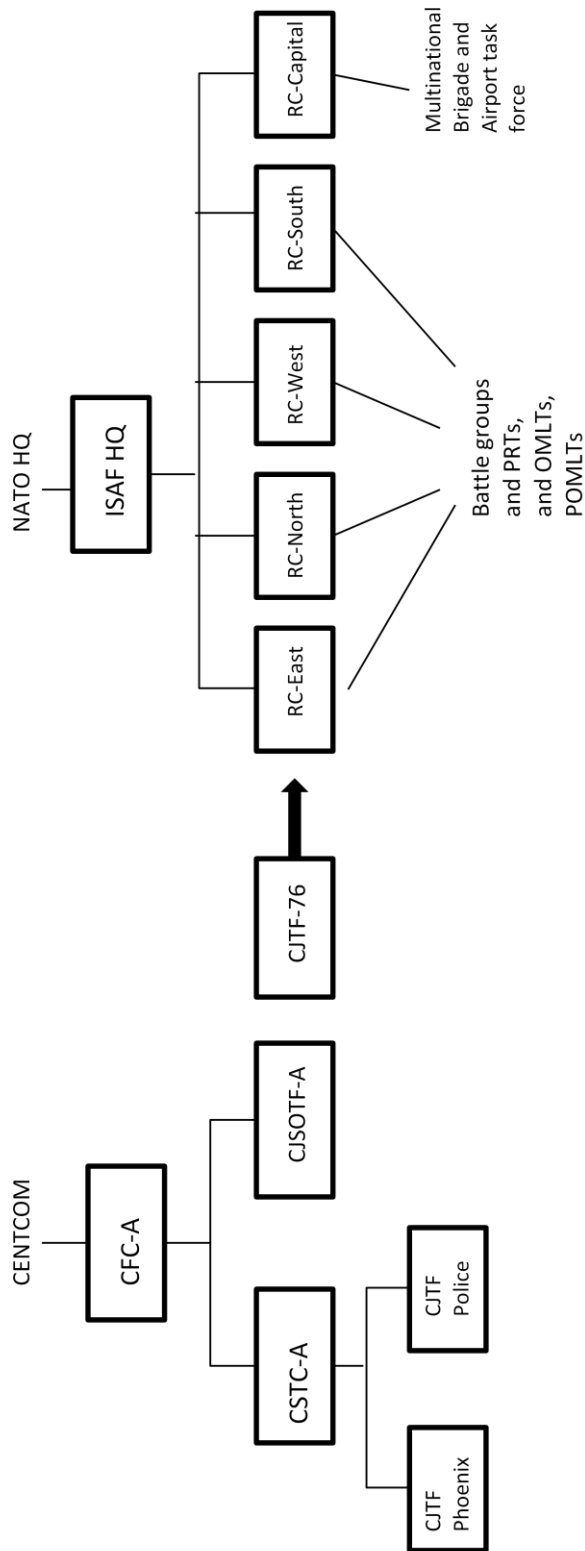


- Notes:
- OMC-A renamed OSC-A in July 2005 when it started ANP training.
 - RC-North HQ established by CJTF-76.
 - ISAF expanded into the west by taking over 4 PRTs.
 - 23 PRTs by end 2005.

2006

OEF

ISAF



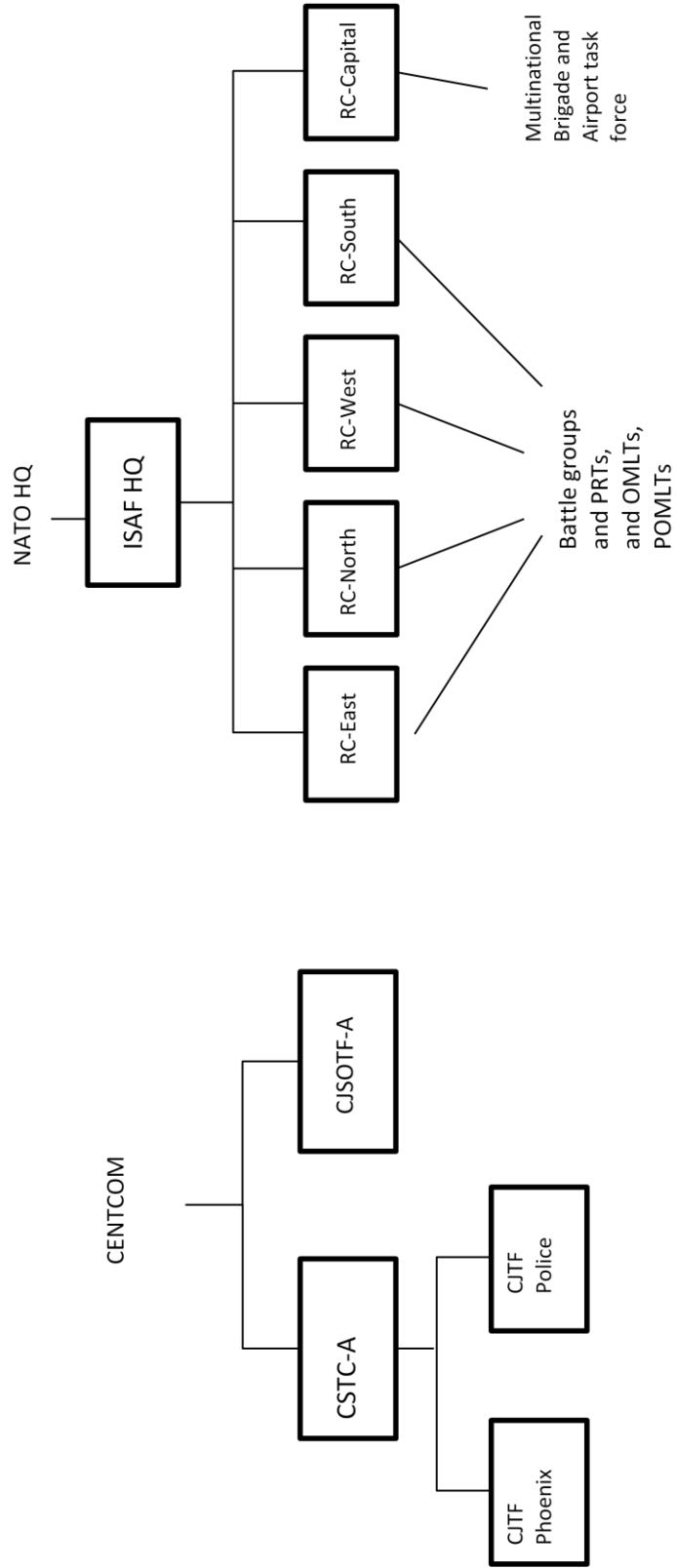
Notes:

- OSC-A renamed CSTC-A.
- June 2006, Germany took over command of RC-North bringing it into ISAF.
- ISAF expanded into the south (July) and east (October); took over command of RC-South and RC-East; all forces in these regions came under ISAF command; CJTF-76 became RC-East headquarters.
- ISAF established RC-Capital and Italy took over command of RC-West.
- 25 PRTs by end 2006.

2007

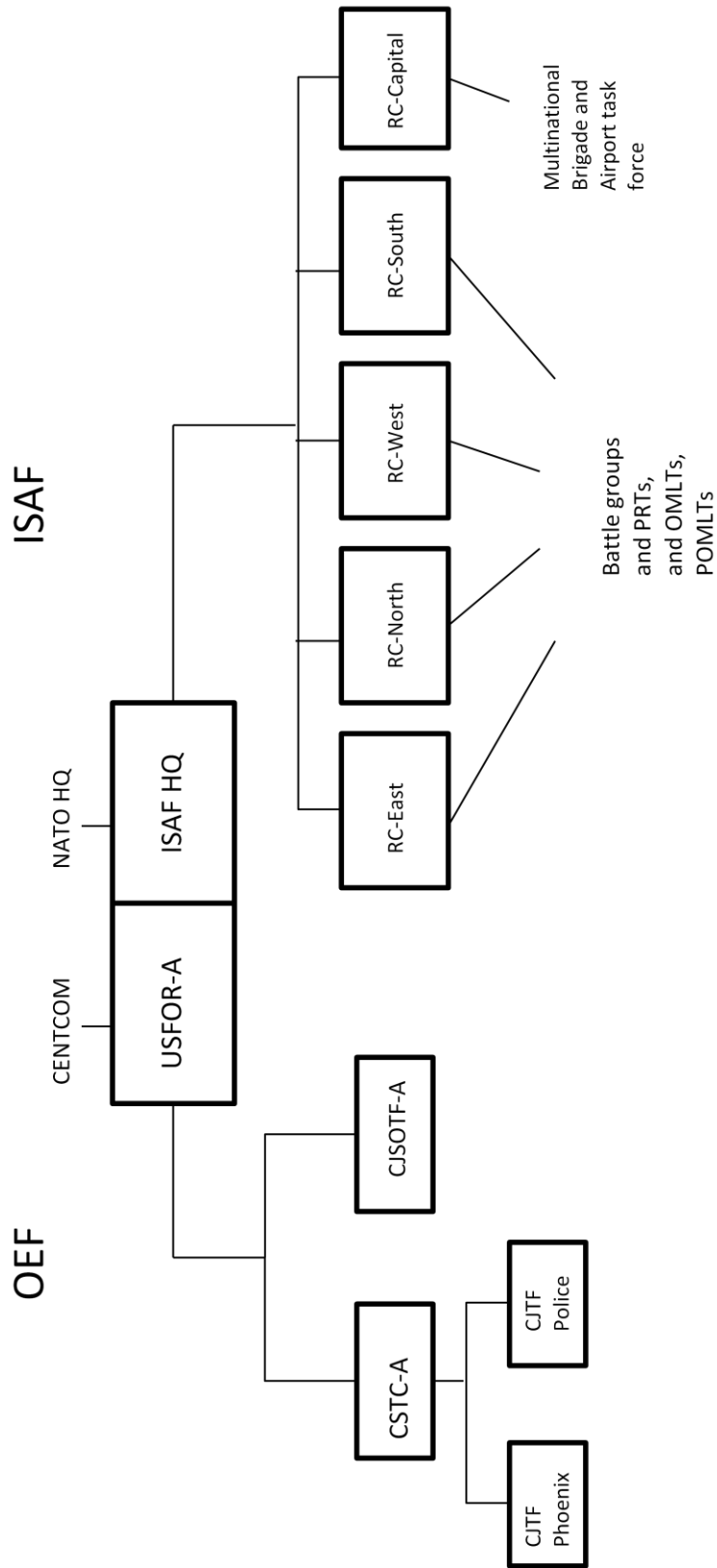
OEF

ISAF



Notes:
 - CFC-A deactivated in January 2007.
 - 25 PRTs (no new PRTs in 2007).

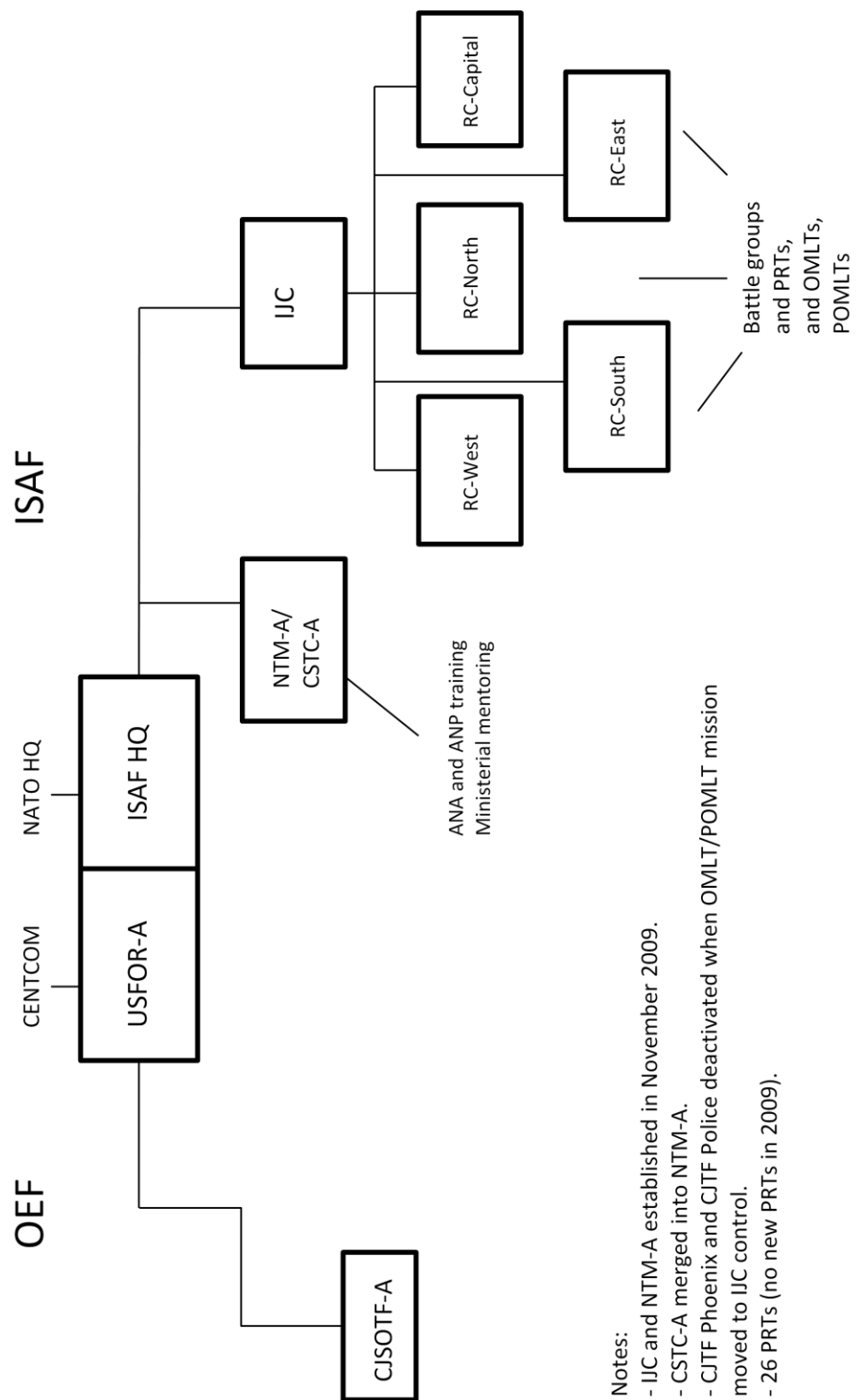
2008



Notes:

- General McKiernan assumed command of ISAF in June 2008; he also assumed command of USFOR-A in October 2008.
- USFOR-A established in October 2008.
- 26 PRTs by end 2008.

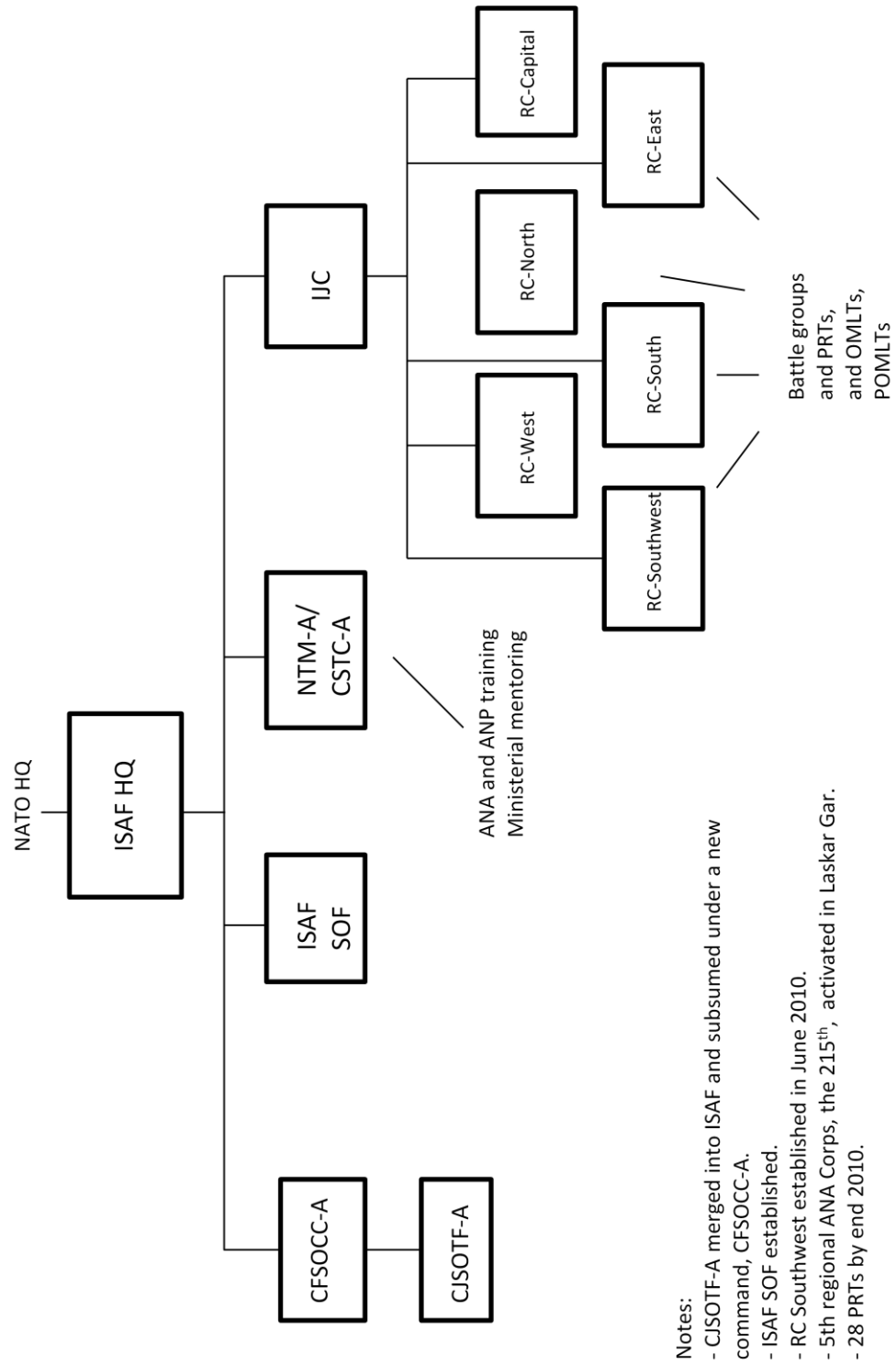
2009



Notes:

- IJC and NTM-A established in November 2009.
- CSTC-A merged into NTM-A.
- CJTF Phoenix and CJTF Police deactivated when OMLT/POMLT mission moved to IJC control.
- 26 PRTs (no new PRTs in 2009).

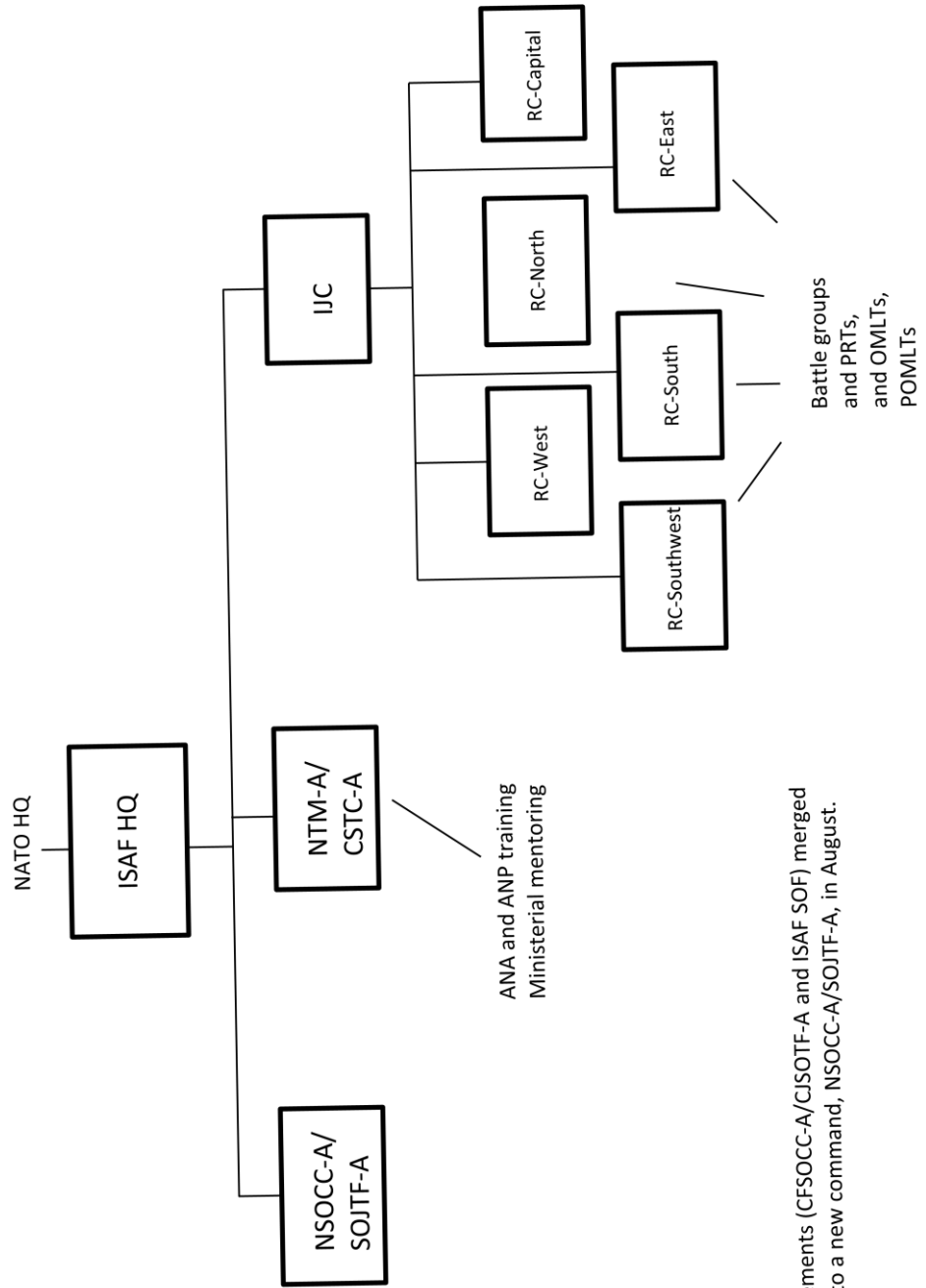
2010



Notes:

- CJOTF-A merged into ISAF and subsumed under a new command, CFSOCC-A.
- ISAF SOF established.
- RC Southwest established in June 2010.
- 5th regional ANA Corps, the 215th, activated in Laskar Gar.
- 28 PRTs by end 2010.

2012



Notes:
- All SOF elements (CFSOCC-A/CJSOTF-A and ISAF SOF) merged together into a new command, NSOCC-A/SOJTF-A, in August.

APPENDIX 3: ISAF ROTATIONS AND COMMANDERS

ISAF I	Dec 2001-Jun 2002	UK lead with augmentation	Major General John McColl, UK
ISAF II	Jun 2002-Feb 2003	Turkey lead with augmentation	Major General Hilmi Akin Zorlu, Turkey
ISAF III	Feb 2003-Aug 2003	1 (German/NL) Corps	Lieutenant General Norbert Van Heyst, Germany
ISAF IV	Aug 2003-Feb 2004	Joint Command Center, Heidelberg, with augmentation	Lieutenant General Götz Gliemeroth, Germany
ISAF V	Feb 2004-Aug 2004	Canada lead with augmentation	Lieutenant General Rick Hillier, Canada
ISAF VI	Aug 2004-Feb 2005	Eurocorps	General Jean-Louis Py, France
ISAF VII	Feb 2005-Aug 2005	NATO Rapid Deployable Corps-Turkey	General Ethem Erdagi, Turkey
ISAF VIII	Aug 2005-May 2006	NATO Rapid Deployable Corps-Italy	General Mauro de Vecchio, Italy
ISAF IX	May 2006-Feb 2007	Allied Rapid Reaction Corps (ARRC)	General Sir David Richards, UK
ISAF X & ISAF XI	Feb 2007-Jun 2008	NATO Rapid Deployable Corps-Stettin (first half); Allied Force Command, Heidelberg (second half)	General Dan McNeill, US
ISAF	Jun 2008-Jun 2009	Composite command that included NATO Rapid Deployable Corps-Italy	General David McKiernan, US
ISAF	Jun 2009-Jun 2010	Composite	General Stanley McChrystal, US
ISAF	Jun 2010-Jul 2010	Composite	Lieutenant General Sir Nick Parker, UK
ISAF	Jul 2010-Jul 2011	Composite	General David Petraeus, US
ISAF	Jul 2011-Feb 2013	3 hq rotations: Allied Force Command, Heidelberg; Eurocorps; Allied Force Command, Madrid	General John Allen, US
ISAF	Feb 2013-Aug 2014	Composite	General John Dunford, US
ISAF	Aug 2014-Dec 2014	Composite	General John Campbell, US

APPENDIX 4: COALITION FORCE LEVELS

April 2002 OEF: 6,500 ISAF: 4,500 (18 nations)		February 2008 OEF: 17,000 ISAF: 43,250 (40 nations)
October 2002 OEF: 14,000 ISAF: 5,000 (21 nations)		November 2008 OEF: 19,000 ISAF: 51,100 (41 nations)
August 2003 OEF: 11,000 ISAF: 6,100 (31 nations)		June 2009 OEF: 24,000 ISAF: 61,130 (42 nations)
June 2004 OEF: 20,000 ISAF: 6,500 (34 nations)		February 2010 ISAF: 85,795 (43 nations) *OEF and ISAF effectively merged
June 2005 OEF: 20,000 ISAF: 8,682 (37 nations)		November 2010 ISAF: 130,930 (48 nations)
December 2005 OEF: 18,000 ISAF: 9,000 (37 nations)		July 2011 ISAF: 132,457 (48 nations)
Spring 2006 OEF: 19,000 ISAF: 9,000 (37 nations)		December 2011 ISAF: 130,408 (50 nations)
September 2006 OEF: 17,000 ISAF: 19,500 (37 nations)		December 2012 ISAF: 102,011 (50 nations)
January 2007 OEF: 9,000 ISAF: 35,460 (37 nations)		December 2013 ISAF: 84,271 (49 nations)
December 2007 OEF: 8,000 ISAF: 41,741 (39 nations)		November 2014 ISAF: 28,360 (48 nations)

The 50 nations in the ISAF coalition as of December 2011 were:

Albania	El Salvador	Latvia	Romania
Armenia	Estonia	Lithuania	Singapore
Australia	Finland	Luxembourg	Slovakia
Austria	France	Macedonia	Slovenia
Azerbaijan	Georgia	Malaysia	Spain
Bahrain	Germany	Mongolia	Sweden
Belgium	Greece	Montenegro	Tonga
Bosnia-Herzegovina	Hungary	Netherlands	Turkey
Bulgaria	Iceland	New Zealand	Ukraine
Canada	Ireland	Norway	United Arab Emirates
Croatia	Italy	Poland	United Kingdom
Czech Republic	Jordan	Portugal	United States
Denmark	Republic of Korea		

APPENDIX 5: PROVINCIAL RECONSTRUCTION TEAMS

PRT	Province	Region & Opening Date	Lead Nation	Contributing Nations
1. Gardez	Paktia	East Jan 2003	U.S.	
2. Bamiyan	Bamiyan	East Mar 2003	U.S., then New Zealand	Malaysia, U.S.
3. Kunduz	Kunduz and Takhar	North Apr 2003	U.S., then Germany	Belgium, Hungary, U.S.
4. Mazar-e-Sharif	Balkh, Sar-e-Pol, Samangan, and Jowzjan	North Jul 2003	UK, then Sweden	Denmark, Finland, Romania, Croatia, U.S.
5. Bagram	Kapisa	East Nov 2003	U.S.	Republic of Korea
6. Herat	Herat	West Dec 2003	U.S., then Italy	France, U.S.
7. Jalalabad	Nangarhar	East Dec 2003	U.S.	
8. Kandahar	Kandahar	South Dec 2003	U.S., then Canada, then U.S.	U.S.
9. Asadabad	Kunar	East Feb 2004	U.S.	
10. Khowst	Khowst	East Mar 2004	U.S.	
11. Ghazni	Ghazni	East Mar 2004	U.S., then Poland	Poland, U.S.
12. Qalat	Zabul	South Apr 2004	U.S.	Romania
13. Feyzabad	Badakhshan	North Jul 2004	Germany	Belgium, Czech, Denmark, U.S.
14. Meymaneh	Faryab	North Jul 2004	UK, then Norway	Finland, U.S., Latvia, Macedonia, Germany, Sweden
15. Lashkar Gar	Helmand	South(west) Sep 2004	U.S. then UK	Denmark, Estonia, U.S.
16. Farah	Farah	West Sep 2004	U.S.	
17. Sharan	Paktika	East Sep 2004	U.S.	
18. Tarin Kowt	Uruzgan	South Sep 2004	U.S., then Netherlands, then Australia	Australia, Slovakia, U.S., NL
19. Pol-e-Khomri	Baghlan	North Oct 2004	Netherlands, then Hungary	Croatia, Bulgaria, Albania, U.S., Montenegro

20. Mehtarlam	Laghman	East Apr 2005	U.S.	
21. Qala-i-Naw	Badghis	West Jul 2005	Spain	U.S.
22. Chaghcharan	Ghowr	West Aug 2005	Lithuania	Croatia, Denmark, Iceland, U.S.
23. Bazarak	Panjshir	East Oct 2005	U.S.	
24. Kala Gush	Nuristan	East Nov 2006	U.S.	
25. Maidan Shar	Wardak	East Nov 2006	Turkey	
26. Pul-e-Alam	Lowgar	East Mar 2008	Czech Republic	U.S.
27. Shibirghan	Jowzjan	North Jul 2010	Turkey	
28. Charikar	Parwan	East Jul 2010	South Korea	

In 2011, one PRT closed: Bazarak.

In 2012, five PRTs closed: Bagram, Feyzabad, Jalalabad, Mehtarlam, Meymaneh.

In 2013, 18 PRTs closed: Asadabad, Bamiyan, Chaghcharan, Charikar, Farah, Gardez, Ghazni, Kala Gush, Kandahar, Khowst, Kunduz, Pol-e-Khomri, Pul-e-Alam, Qala-i-Naw, Qalat, Sharan, Shibirghan, Tarin Kowt.

In 2014, final four PRTs closed: Herat, Laskar Gar, Maidan Shar, Mazar-e-Sharif.

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IV. DOCTORAL DISSERTATIONS

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V. PERIODICALS AND NEWS SOURCES

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